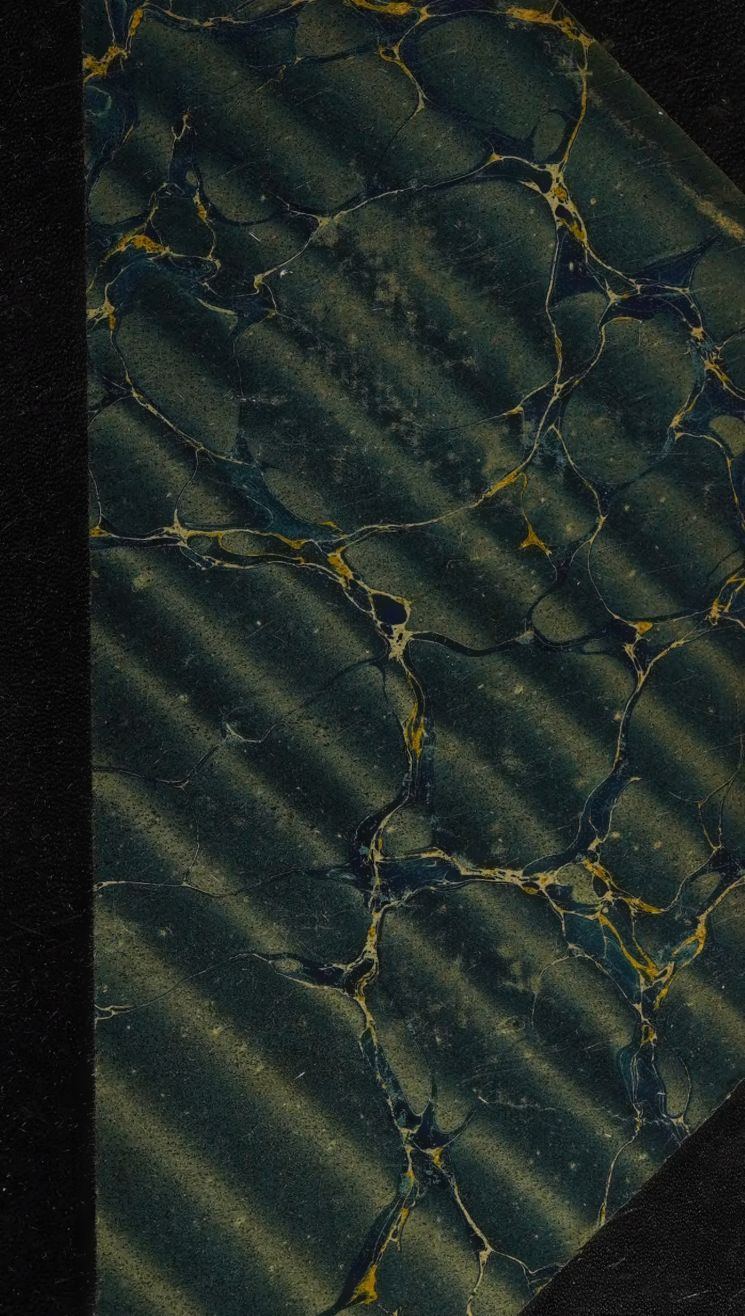

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THE

RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE YOUNG.

By EPHRAIM PEABODY.

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THE

RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE YOUNG.

In making the Religious Culture of the Young the subject of a tract, our purpose is not to exhort parents to fidelity in a matter whose importance is universally recognized, but to make some practical suggestions respecting the best manner of conducting it.

At the outset, an important discrimination is to be made between Education and Instruction. The purpose of instruction is to communicate knowledge; that of education, to develop, unfold, and train the faculties. The difference is seen in the derivation of the words. *To instruct* is to build up, to build upon. *To educate* is to educe, to draw out, to develop. They are often confounded together, and this confusion easily leads to the neglect of one or the other. But though having the same general end, they are both in the methods and in the immediate results unlike. They are, however, subsidiary each to the other; each is dependent on the other, and neither can be dispensed with. We shall speak of them separately. And, first, of what may be more properly called, in the limited sense here spoken of, Religious Education.

The first thing in the religious nurture of the young is to

awaken what is termed, in general, the religious sentiment; that is, those sentiments and affections which connect man with God, — gratitude, reverence, trust, awe, submission to his will, the desire of his approval. And this part of education should begin in earliest childhood. The idea of the goodness and care of God, and his love of goodness and kindness and truth, should be blended, inextricably, with the child's first thoughts, with its earliest enjoyment of the natural world, with its earliest pleasures and notions of duty. And this, among others, for two reasons. First, because a filial reverence for God is the only trustworthy foundation of a virtuous character. When such a sentiment grows up from childhood, firmly associated with the habits of the mind and the responsibilities of life, we have the best assurance we can have, that the man will be sensitive to the calls of duty, and that, even in his neglects and failures, he will feel that he *ought* to keep his heart pure and his life right. He will carry in his heart a perpetual monitor and guide. Whereas, to a mind thoroughly dispossessed of the idea of God, conscience will be but a name or a delusion, and duty but another word for usage or utility. Not only the religious, but the moral, life will finally depend on reverence for that Being who loves righteousness and looks with abhorrence on iniquity.

Secondly, it should be in childhood, because it is the time for it. Every thing has its season. There are sentiments and affections which, left unawakened in childhood, will probably never be roused to any controlling activity, and this is one of them. If a child have no respectful feelings for superiors or affection for parents, it is in vain to hope that they will come with age. If the conscience of childhood is never awakened by being appealed to, you look in vain for any great moral sensibility in manhood. Just so with the

religious sentiment. If childhood passes away without its being awakened; if all the early associations — which, once fixed, are as difficult to be moved as the foundations of a house, — the associations with man, and duty, and nature, and human life — are once formed, leaving God out; if this appropriate season be neglected, the man may afterwards have all the philosophy of religion in his head, but he will have but little of the religious spirit in his heart. And besides, if there be this neglect, the mind is not left vacant, but, in the place of those which ought to exist, spring up other sentiments, passions, interests, which absorb the nutriment of the soul, — a thick overgrowth, beneath whose shade the religious sentiment struggles up vainly towards the air and light. For this reason it is, that the wisest and best men have been more thankful for nothing, than that in their earliest years their parents awakened their hearts to a consciousness of the Divine goodness and to a reverence for the Divine will. They feel that their parents did what might easily have been neglected, but which neglected, the loss would have been, practically, all but irretrievable. Of the greatest and wisest men, many a one has looked back to a mother, not wise, perhaps, as the world counts wisdom, with undying gratitude and honor, not merely for her affection, but because in a truly wise affection she opened his mind to thoughts of God and taught his heart to look up in trust and reverence to him. And though long gone from the earth, she stands for ever, in his memory of the past and his thoughts of the future, a blessed spirit between him and heaven. All of human philosophy he has since learned is but the vain trifling of a summer's day compared with those early lessons from a mother's heart, which have given to his heart a prevailing, cheerful, hopeful sense of a beneficent and guiding Providence. How, then, is the

religious sentiment to be awakened? It must, obviously, be mainly through domestic influences. The child lives in a narrow circle, and whatever is done for it must be done in that circle. It is not chiefly by direct instructions, by arguments which the child can hardly attend to or understand, by commands, which awaken fears, but not affections, nor by requiring creeds and catechisms to be committed to memory, though, as will presently appear, we do not underrate the importance of the memory in religious instruction. It is most effectually done through a general influence, often acting indirectly and incidentally. It is the order of Providence that a child's heart shall be awakened through its *sympathies*, rather than its reason. If it sees that its parents, its older brothers and sisters, and their friends whom it respects, sincerely reverence the will of God, that their conduct and views of life are swayed by this reverence, that for their own sake they value the religious spirit and value those institutions and usages which promote it, it will adopt their feelings into its own soul. They may have defects and inconsistencies of character, but a child readily makes the proper discrimination. It sees, notwithstanding their defects and shortcomings, what their real convictions are, and they become his. He loves what they love. He honors what they honor. Their habitual persuasions and feelings respecting life and God and duty become his. There is no need of many words. Children are more influenced by phrases than by speeches, and by life than by either. But let there be a really religious tone of faith and sentiment in those around him whom he respects, he can no more escape the influence of this social atmosphere, than a healthy tree in a congenial soil can help putting forth leaves in spring. He may have very imperfect religious opinions as compared with any scientific system of theology, his practice may fall far below

his own idea of duty, but the religious sentiment will be awakened. And once thoroughly awakened, it will never be lost from the mind. There is nothing so unchangeable on earth as these early feelings and associations of the heart. In after life, *opinions* may change with every year, but the original *sentiment* survives through all their changes. The man may become skeptical in faith, and yet all his days his heart, early baptized in religion, will be rising up to abjure his speculations. An absurd superstition wrought into the mind of childhood, like the funeral moss on tropical trees, hangs on the action of the mind in its ripest manhood. If low, impure, corrupt sentiments obtain admission into the child's heart, who does not know that he is almost foredoomed to a low and grovelling moral tone all his days. On the other hand, when men in riper years are reclaimed from vicious courses, it is almost invariably found that in childhood the moral and religious sentiment was awakened, and that the reformation of manhood is but the revival of sentiments fixed in the child's heart, — the rekindling of the fire, long hid under the ashes, but never extinguished.

But beside this influence which comes from the general character of the domestic and social life under which the child is brought, there are three points which should be made the subject of special consideration, and in a suitable way should receive special attention.

1. The first relates to the ideas which the child forms of God. A greater calamity cannot befall it, than to have its early notions of the Divine Being perverted; and it is so because the child's feelings towards God, and so its views of religion and morality, will be determined by its ideas of the Divine character. Suppose that in the home — (and we take this illustration because the domestic relations are made by the Saviour the interpreters of those which we

sustain to God) — parents are hard, selfish, unaffectionate, exacting, dealing only in commands, and threats, and penalties, meeting their child always with coldness and frowns, showing no sympathy for his weakness, or gratification in his good efforts, the child may try to love such parents, but will probably find it impossible. Home will be the saddest and dreariest place in the world to him. He will be glad to escape from its climate of night and frost. He will seek his pleasures abroad, and the light will fade out of his countenance when the time comes again to enter his home. If he grow up affectionate and dutiful, it will be a moral miracle. On the other hand, if his parents are his best friends, if they are made glad by his virtues, if he trusts them and is always sure of their sympathy, if his relations with them are happy, cheerful, confiding, and of a kind to encourage and foster his good purposes, he must be exposed to very bad influences abroad, or he will almost certainly grow up into an affectionate, confiding, and probably virtuous man.

The universe, to follow out the illustration, is but a large home, over which presides the Infinite Father. If the child is led to regard God as throned ever amidst thunders and lightnings, his features clothed with frowns, — as if, constituting merely the police of the world, he employed his omniscience only in spying out and bringing to condign punishment the sins of his creatures, — an awful power from whose hands there is no escape, — what can be the real sentiments which will be awakened in the child's heart? The universe will be to him a terrible prison, in which there is no concealment, and from which there is no outlet. His most awful idea — one which, as it comes, will take the light out of the eye and joy out of the heart — will be the idea of God. Religion will be, not a good in itself, but a contrivance

to escape the yawning gulf into which he is sliding. Such ideas fairly wrought into the heart of a child of any sensibility, and unaccompanied and uncounteracted by other ideas, will go far to blight the moral life. It will make religion a service of fear, with power enough perhaps to subdue the will, and enslave, but not win, the heart.

Let the child learn to think of God as its best friend, in its sins even its best friend, in his laws its best friend, — as a Being whose goodness is as universal as the light or air, — as one in whom it may entirely trust, whose commands are for its welfare, who is interested in all its struggles to do right, and who looks with condemnation only on what is bad and unjust and unkind and untrue. Let it have, not because it is for its pleasure, but because it is right so to do, happy and confiding and relying thoughts of God.

2. The second point to be specially regarded is the duty of obeying God, — not merely doing what is abstractly right, but doing it with reference to the Divine Being, as that which he commands and approves. We speak of it here, not as a duty, but in connection with the education of the religious sentiment. Its importance is seen by looking at the parental and filial relation. The love of children for parents of course depends on various causes, but among all, no one does more to determine its depth and permanence than an early habit of obedience. It is so because this habit is one great source of disinterestedness, and because without disinterestedness the affections, so far as they are unselfish, and they are essentially unselfish, must be dwarfed, narrowed, and deadened. If the child never forms the habit of obedience when the wishes of a parent conflict with its own, it forms the opposite habit of obeying its own wishes in despite of the parent. The child that never learns to surrender its self-will to the wishes of a parent, will never

have an affection for that parent strong enough to make it sacrifice its own wishes. Such a child is likely as he grows up to possess what is a very common, but a very meagre and poor, character, — one in which, perhaps, there is amiability and good nature and generosity, if what is demanded interferes with no strong wish, or will, or object of ambition, but with a heart as hard as steel, the moment he is asked to surrender for the benefit of others what really is any object of strong desire to himself. Obedience to parents is the discipline appointed by Providence for the early and healthful development of the affections, — for the early and healthful subjugation of *self-will* to the *higher order of affections*. It is by a trusting, respectful, dutiful obedience to a wise and kind parent that the affections are best developed. And he who has never learned this obedience has lost almost the best privilege and opportunity of childhood.

Just so with the Divine Being. Trust and reverence and gratitude and love to God will never exist in any strength, until we learn to surrender our self-will to his holy and just and merciful will. In the perfected character, one obeys because he loves; but the first steps which lead into the temple are by the pathway of obedience. Therefore should a child learn to obey God. Therefore should it be taught to question itself, whether its habits, its passions, its feelings and purposes are such as God would desire to see in his children, — to do it, of course, not as a slave before a master, but as a trusting and dutiful child to an affectionate parent. In doing this, the child will learn to surrender its self-will to the highest law and holiest love. The best sentiments of religion will be cherished and established in its heart. And above all, it will from childhood associate the practice of duty in its daily life with the approval of God. It will be saved

from the disastrous mistake of separating morals and religion, and will feel that they are as closely united as the stream and the fountain, — as motive and act.

3. The third point relates to the subject of prayer. Prayer keeps alive a sense of dependence on God. It brings the child consciously into the Divine presence, as a creature of God's care and love. It is essentially a grateful, trusting, submissive consciousness of dependence on God. It connects earth with heaven, and the blessings of life with their Author. It awakens in the soul the habitual feeling, that over its daily paths and over its midnight sleep is the care of the Infinite Father; and never can the child learn too early to look for protection and guidance and help to that Being to whom we must all look, and on whose mercy parent and child are alike dependent. The prayer of a child may be no more than a sentence, than the verse of a hymn; but, if possible, let it be able never to remember the time when it did not feel that there was one Being to whom it might look up, not only as the most powerful and wise, but the most beneficent, Being of the universe. Let it be able never to remember the time when it did not habitually pray to God.

The great object in all these cases is to awaken certain sentiments, to give direction to the thoughts, and to lead the child to form certain habits of act and thought for itself, — so that throughout its days it may feel that it is a child of God, living under a heavenly care, and in every just and useful and truthful purpose sure of the approval and favor of God.

But supposing this part of religious culture to have been attended to, it is still only a part. As the child passes on into youth, he begins to speculate on that which was before but a sentiment resting on two or three great fundamental ideas. The intellect is not satisfied till it can render an

account to itself of the relations of man to God and to futurity. The time comes when the mind requires that what was a sentiment shall be translated into ideas; and when the sentiment will itself become feeble and inefficient unless sustained by intellectual convictions. Here comes the place for what we have called *Religious Instruction.*

Before, however, considering the best method of communicating it, there are one or two previous topics on which it is desirable that we should have, not merely undefined fancies, but settled opinions; for, practically, they will materially affect the heartiness with which we enter upon any course of religious instruction.

1. The first relates to the worth of such instruction. An objection to it, substantially like this, is sometimes heard. It is not well to give the young any special lessons on religious subjects; they are not old enough; it prejudices them, anticipates their own judgment, prevents their thinking freely hereafter; let them grow up uncommitted, and, when arrived at mature years, study and think and form conclusions for themselves.

If they could grow up with really uncommitted, unprejudiced, and open minds, perhaps the objection might have weight; but it is impossible. The question is not whether a child shall be taught, but who shall be the teachers. If you neglect all oversight of its mind, the child does not therefore cease to learn. At a very early period, the great questions of religion are felt to be of the most serious and engrossing importance. Little may be said of them, but how deep a hold, in their hours of solitude and silent thought, do they take of the hearts of the young! How many can look back and still remember how, at different periods, from the age of twelve to twenty, these questions of religion were matters of most anxious and profound thought and interest; so much

so, indeed, as to make those years the very turning-point of their destiny. The youthful eye rested not on these walls of the material universe, but looked above and beyond, and speculated of God, and eternity, and the mysteries of the human soul. Providence does not leave this to accident, but, by the constitution of the mind, provides that every one at the outset of life shall be impelled to take interest in those questions on which its destiny is to depend. It is thus the very time for instruction. If it receive no guidance from you, it will catch its religious notions from religious debates and discussions, from the casual talk of the streets, from its companions, from the books it reads, from associates, perhaps from irreligious scoffers, or zealous sectarists, who, without any of your affection, will be glad to warp its mind to their ways of thinking.

If this result do not follow, your neglect is any thing but a protection to the freedom of the mind. The mind is made free, not by ignorance, but by knowledge and the love of truth. The more information the man has, the larger is the circle in which his mind moves, and the more free he is to form opinions for himself. There is no slavery and there are no prejudices like those of ignorance. In nothing else, certainly, do we esteem a youth of ignorance to be a good preparation for intellectual freedom and judicious thinking in manhood.

But suppose the young person receives and forms no religious notions, good or bad. The mind, vacated by religious thoughts, will by no means remain empty, but will be filled, preoccupied, and biased by other interests. The balance of subjects will be lost. The habit of treating religious subjects with indifference will be formed, and will probably not be broken. If you have thus preserved to one an open field in which to form opinions, you have done it at the disastrous cost of crippling his freedom of action, and of paralyzing his

disposition to think of such subjects at all. There are few religious errors, likely to be taught to a child, nearly so pernicious as the being taught nothing. What child was ever grateful, that they who are interested in its welfare neglected all means of aiding it in its religious questions and doubts? What one is not thankful for all the conscientious religious instruction he received, although he has seen fit since to cast aside as erroneous every special opinion he was taught? Who has not found, in such early instructions, the best materials out of which to build up opinions of his own?

Nor is there any incapacity to receive such instruction at an early period. The sublimest moral truths are also the simplest. The higher truths of science require, to understand them, much previous knowledge and discipline of mind. The best preparation for understanding the sublimest religious truths are the innocent and pure heart, the unperverted conscience, and warm and trusting affections. The child may not use your language, but you can teach it nothing worth learning of God, which it cannot understand as well as you. Such doctrines as those of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins are as intelligible to your child as to yourself. Its conceptions of the immortal life may be as spiritual and elevated as your own. Nay, the child has often a quicker vision for these eternal verities than they whose eyes are dimmed, and hearts hardened, by their worldly lives.

Above all, this early religious instruction is peculiarly incumbent on those who receive the general views which most of us hold. Those who regard the child as totally depraved, and who have no hope of its salvation save from an unconditional election and a miraculous conversion, might, (though none, as a matter of fact, have been more faithful to this duty than they,) consistently with their views, neglect the early religious instruction of the young. But all our views

involve the necessity of education, and imply that the main thing is not the conversion of the old, but the rearing of the young as Christians from their earliest years, so that, if possible, they shall not need this conversion.

But without dwelling longer on these considerations, we come back to the main point. From some one or other the child's mind will be filled with religious ideas, and the only practical question is, whether we shall leave it to accident, exposed to every kind of superstition and perversion of truth, or whether pains shall be taken to secure as good instruction as may be within our reach.

2. The second topic relates to the nature of this instruction.

By religious education, as has been already said, we here understand, in general terms, the development and training up of the moral and religious sentiments. In this sense it is the result of many causes combined, of which religious instruction, however important, is only one. The moral and religious sentiments in the child are awakened, stimulated, guided, invigorated, by the influences of home, by the church, by prayer and by obedience to God's will, by books and by solitude, by the various trials which Providence appoints, by the internal activity of the mind itself. The great place for religious education is the home, and the great teachers are parents, books, the general moral atmosphere of the home, and the great system of Providence, which surrounds all with influences that tend to awaken the religious sentiment. And there are few parents who do not give much thought and effort to this subject. Many parents endeavour to surround their children with good religious influences, who are any thing but religious themselves. Their affections are more faithful than their consciences, and by a blessed inconsistency they will endeavour to save a child from

the very neglects and sins of which they are themselves daily guilty. But in any attempts at religious education, it is soon seen that the religious sentiment stands related to great realities in the spiritual world, has objects external to itself, and, like the affections, is speedily colored, directed, purified or corrupted, raised or lowered, according to the estimate which the mind forms of those objects. The mind of the child refuses to remain in a vague sentiment, but questions the reality of those truths of which its nature compels it to think, and craves definite convictions, and longs for something on which to rest.

Here comes the place for religious instruction. Its purpose is to give just ideas of the great principles of religion to the mind. It is not itself religious education, but a help to it; not the vine, with its rich and bursting clusters, but the supporting branch which prevents their trailing on the ground, and lifts them up into the sun and air. What, then, shall be the course pursued?

In general, the child should receive instruction respecting the nature, the truths, and requirements of our religion; and the principal method of doing this is to bring those who are taught into acquaintance with the Bible, and with whatever is necessary to the understanding of it. What is chiefly wanted is not the study of works on natural religion, or Christian evidences. A great part of the skeptical difficulties which perplex many minds arise, not from the want of such study, but from an ignorance of what Christianity actually is. The old custom of reading the Bible has very much decayed. Not a few grow up without having once read throughout that book which contains the records of their nominal faith; and by this ignorance they are made equally accessible to doubts, and incapable of solving them. For this negative reason, and for the positive one that the Bible con-

tains our rules of faith and practice as intelligent and responsible beings, it should be made the subject of study. And in this we include the Old as well as the New Testament. The importance of the Gospels no one questions. Of course it is in them that we are to find Christianity, and they must form the basis of religious instruction. But we would by no means confine ourselves to them. Any proper plan of study must include the whole Bible.

We cannot but think that there is a very common misapprehension respecting the value and use of the Old Testament. We doubt if even the New Testament is better suited to convey to the child's mind the grandest truths of religion than the Old. The difficulties which we find or fancy, — half of them the growth of our worldliness, our shallowness, our imperfect experiences, our pretentious and self-confident ignorance, — even if real, the child does not feel. It overrides them, and triumphs over them like a bark careering over the waves. It was written for the childhood of society, and childhood still seems to have the key to understand its picturesque, emotional, unintrospective style aright. We cavil about the geology and astronomy of Genesis. The child reads only (what indeed those chapters were written to teach) that the heavens and the earth, this fair green earth, these rounded and shining heavens, and the all-hallowing and all-pervading light and life, are the work of Almighty God. It neither knows nor cares any thing about the last geological theory. It is not delving in the earth's crust, but its imagination is kindled, its wings soar upwards into the opening morning of time, and it beholds the spirit of God moving over the darkness and the infinite waste, and silently, and omnipotently, evoking from chaos the fair and ordered universe. God over all! by his silent will, upholding and sustaining all! the ever-benignant and adorable Creator! — this,

the sublimest and holiest truth of religion, the child finds in these chapters, and the very picturesqueness of the language, the self-abandonment of the style, which is the origin of so much of our embarrassment, is what attracts the child and makes the truth intelligible, — is the very thing which makes it so much more appropriate to a child's mind than the formal statements of a catechism, or the logical conclusions of a treatise on natural theology.

The child reads of the garden of Eden; how sin brought suffering and all our woe into the world; of the guilt of Cain, and how his guilt, once acted, wrought out a retribution of its own; of the deluge; of the patriarchs; of the Israelites; and whatever else there may be, however black or bright the lives of men, over the guilty earth rides full-orbed, lighting up the darkness below, one great truth, — the truth that God loves righteousness, abhors iniquity, and governs the world by righteous laws. The child reads the life of David. His crimes, if they are remembered, are a warning beacon. But probably it remembers chiefly only what is beautiful and inspiring, — the friendship of David and Jonathan; how, when hunted for his death, the heroic minstrel shepherd again and again spared the life of Saul; how his tender and magnanimous spirit pined for the water of his own sweet, native spring in Bethlehem, and how, when three of his bravest men broke through the beleaguering host, and brought water from the well, he could not drink what such devotion had procured at such peril, and poured it out, an offering to the Lord. The child may remember his guilt, but he remembers also his remorse, and his penitence, and how guilt brought its eternal companion, woe. But here, and throughout the Old Testament, he is made familiar with the present Providence of God, — no limited or partial being, but over all his works, — looking with abhorrence on cruelty and injustice, and with

his favor on righteousness, and truth, and mercy. From end to end, the Old Testament is bathed in this atmosphere of a Divine Providence. This one great truth of God is the key-note of psalm and of prophecy, the golden thread running through the fragments of history and song, and makes the worst deeds of men throw forward into clearer light the righteousness of Heaven. And the great truth which the Old Testament sets forth is precisely that truth which every considerate person would desire to have stamped earliest and stamped deepest in the child's heart.

In early childhood, the Sunday school furnishes, in its place, a good opportunity for the instruction proposed; not that it supplies or takes the place of instruction at home, but it may be made profitably to aid it. The Sunday school has various other uses, but we should be disposed to have the direct instruction given to those under twelve years of age confined to the committing to memory, with great thoroughness, carefully selected passages of the Bible, and some few hymns embodying their spirit; and on these we would have the instructions of the teacher founded. And for this reason. Such passages sink into the child's mind and heart. Those forms which contain the greatest religious truths fix the truths there ineffaceably. They become surrounded with all sacred associations and memories, so that a child thus taught is likely never to be able to remember the time when it did not attach to these great truths the sanctity both of reverence and affection. We would thus deposit the truth in the child's mind, like a precious seed in its envelope, leaving it there to wait for the fitting time and occasion to germinate, certain that the time, sooner or later, will come. It is of no consequence that the child should understand all it learns. It would be a sad day for the child if it were precluded from learning every thing not within its full comprehension. Only

let the truths be there, and the trials and experiences of life will call them out, and bring to light their worth ; as the progress of the seasons calls out the hidden germs, each in its turn, on which the harvest depends. There alone is no harvest where the seed has not been planted till the harvest-time has come ; and that moral seed bears little fruit, which has not rooted itself in the soul long before the special occasion on which you need its support arrives.

These passages thus committed to memory need not be very numerous ; but they should be such as contain, sometimes in a single verse, the essential truths of religion. They should be such psalms as "The Lord is my shepherd" ; such parables as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Talents, the Unforgiving Debtor ; such passages from the Epistles as Paul's description of charity, and his argument for immortality ; such teachings of Christ as the Sermon on the Mount ; his declarations respecting the everlasting life, his last conversations with his disciples, and those few last words of his through which, as the blazing sun through the rent storm-clouds, bursts forth over the whole world the full glory of his character. And these passages, more or less, as may be convenient, should be thoroughly learned, repeated again and again, in accordance with the taste of childhood, till they are wrought into the very circulations of the mind and made a part of its life ; and on these should be founded the instructions of the teacher.

During the years immediately following, it might be well to pursue a course which would make the child acquainted with the Bible *historically*. Let it read in order, under the guidance of the teacher, as the basis of further instructions, those selected portions which will make it most familiar with the most important parts of the Old and New Testament.

At length the time arrives when the most important relig-

ious questions begin to struggle blindly in the heart, and when the mind demands definite convictions. At this time a different course is needed. We would ask whether it is not desirable, when this period arrives, (perhaps, in general, there is no more suitable time than at the conclusion of the school education,) for the young men and women of a society to go through, under the guidance of the minister, a course of religious instruction, regularly and systematically, as they pursue any other study; and whether it is not a subject of so much importance, that it should be one of the chief objects kept in view in the ministrations of a church. One difficulty would be the extent to which the young are engrossed and confined already. The plan proposed would require time, and coöperation on the part of the young. A minister might easily deliver lectures on important subjects, but unless these were attended by corresponding reading and study, they would be of little use. We do not hesitate to set apart a distinct portion of time in which the young may learn a foreign language, or some personal accomplishment; we set aside stated hours to be devoted to music, to drawing, or whatever other study we deem advisable. It may be assumed that no study can be so important, as that which relates to the right plan, the relations, the duties, and the destiny of life; and these are included in the idea of religion. Why, then, should not a plan be adopted which will require that in a young person's life a certain portion of time shall be especially set aside for a study of the principles of that religion which, if he have any, is to be his. That which is supremely valuable to us is worthy of having bestowed upon its attainment both time and labor. It ought not to be crowded aside by every thing else, and left to a chance hour, if that should ever come, but ought to be made a specific department of education, without which no young person should consider his education completed.

Of course, no plan would be adapted to all cases. But in order to be as definite as possible, the following is suggested, as one which, with some modifications, has been found to be practically useful. It is intended for those who have reached the age of seventeen or eighteen, — it would hardly be suited to those much younger, — and may be conveniently divided into four parts.

In the first part, the principal object would be a fuller understanding of the Sacred Records. Different methods might be used. One method, as good perhaps as any, is for the minister to select certain great points, an understanding of which would necessarily imply the attainment of most valuable information respecting the Scriptures, and to go over these carefully with his pupils. Such subjects as the following might be chosen, as central points from which to view the order of Providence as displayed in the Sacred History: — the Mosaic law; the Connection between the Old and New Testaments; the Sermon on the Mount; the method and characteristics of Christ's teaching; the miracles; the death and resurrection of Christ; the day of Pentecost, at which time the Apostles commenced to teach what their Master had left in their charge; the first martyrdom, and the external obstacles to the progress of Christianity; the first Christian controversy, and the internal difficulties with which Christianity had to contend; the Epistles; the Apocalypse.

In the second part, were the plan pursued, a somewhat systematic view would be given of the great principles of Christianity. The minds of men demand a certain degree of definiteness in their religious convictions. Religion may be essentially a sentiment, yet the sentiment presupposes an intellectual faith. What is Christianity? Wherein does it differ from heathenism, or from what we may learn from the light of nature? What is it that makes it what it is? What

are its fundamental principles? To state these, — not the shades of opinion which separate one sect from another, — but to state the great principles of our religion, both doctrinal and practical, which give it its character and power, would be the purpose of this portion of the course.

The third part should have for its object to give definite ideas respecting the nature of the Christian life, as it relates to one's self, to man, and to God; what are the conditions, duties, evidences, and fruits of the Christian character; what are the terms of God's acceptance, and what helps and assurances Christ holds out to the soul which would follow him.

The object of the fourth part would be to trace the development of this religion as it unfolded itself into the literature and the philosophy, the art, the legislation, the social customs, the morals, the private manners of succeeding times, — to trace this new element as it unfolded itself into the history of the ages that succeeded Christ, — to see the extent, the limit, and the nature of its influence on man and society.

This is not offered as a plan embracing all that it might be profitable to know, but as embracing subjects with which, at the least, a well-informed person ought to possess some acquaintance.

This instruction should be founded on the Bible. It contains the records of our faith. Were there no experience on the subject, we must say that the best religious instruction is that which makes us acquainted with what these records really contain. But experience teaches that the Bible has been the most powerful influence in the world. In every land where it has been heartily received and studied, it has raised the character of the people, and blessed them in every relation. The study may sometimes suggest difficulties, but the difficulties provoke a further study which finds their solution. There are things hard to be understood, whole books

which stand there as a mystery, but somehow or other, united together, they have done what nothing else has done; they have transmitted from age to age, and bound on the consciences of men, the holiest truth; like another ark, whose timbers when separate seem rude and unshapen, but when united hold the very treasures of humanity, and float down safely over the floods, the life of the world. The sun has not been more the centre of light than the Bible of moral life. And its worth has been estimated more and more highly, just as the higher sentiments have been awakened, and the true nature and end of life been more clearly seen. For ages, grateful men have chanted its psalms of thanksgiving. Penitent men have sought hope in its promises. Conscientious men have gained strength from its truths; and dying men have taken refuge in its declarations of an immortal life. What the best men have found it to be to them, we may hope that it will be to us, and to our children, — the best help in weakness, the best guide in doubt, the best encouragement in fear, the best source of consolation in sorrow, and of hope in death.

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WORSHIP.

By EDMUND H. SEARS.

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WORSHIP.

THERE are religious doctrines which are vital and fundamental, which being darkened, or taken away, the whole system of Christian truth is perverted or loses its power. And a moment's reflection will reveal to you what that idea is, which is central and organific; around which all other forms of belief gather and take their shape and coloring. It is the idea of God. That is every man's most interior thought, and, whether consciously or not, it will control all his modes of thinking, and shape his whole faith in its moulds. If you think falsely about God, you will think falsely about every thing else; — about Nature, whose objects are the prints and copies of God's ideas; — about man, God's image and likeness; — about life, and society, the outgoings and ongoings of humanity, or man in action; — about the future life, — heaven, — hell, — the ultimate spiritual developments of human nature; — about Christ, the Divine Word made flesh, and entering into human history; — about revelation and Divine influence, — the Divine mind acting upon the human, or God imparting himself to humanity. Hence it is that the term *theology*, which means literally the science of God, has come to represent the whole system of religious doctrines, for *that* shines in the midst of every system; — that is the sun, all other truths are the stars that move round it; and from it they trick their beams and fill their urns with light. Sophistical and shallow reasoners will tell you that theological doctrines are mere speculations, which have no intelligible reference to practice, and that it

makes very little difference what a man believes. As if it made no difference whether the whole moral firmament, that stretches over him and spans his journey from his cradle to his grave, should have all its lights burning brightly and moving harmoniously, and should rain sweet influences from its ever tranquil skies; or whether he shall journey on by the flash of meteors, or by murky fires of his own kindling; or whether, again, all shall go out, and leave him to grope his way, till his feet stumble upon the dark mountains.

It would be interesting to follow out this subject at large; but, however tempting the field, I must confine myself to a single branch of the subject, — the idea of God as affecting the nature and efficacy of religious worship.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. In *spirit*, for worship may be formal; in *truth*, for worship may be false.

And first, there are minds in which this idea fades away and becomes dim; whose conceptions of God are utterly indistinct and shadowy, if they conceive of such a being at all. Indeed, it is the inevitable consequence of a worldly and godless life, that it brings the soul into that state described in those few graphic words of the Apostle, "without God in the world." The evil is not now so much, that the mind thinks falsely about God, as that it does not think of him at all. The influence of this state of mind upon public worship will be pretty obvious. You may know by a single glance at almost any congregation whether this intense worldliness has invaded its forms. Such a people will come together, not so much for the worship as for the preaching; and not so much for the preaching, again, as for keeping up ceremonies, which are thought, on the whole, to be decent and respectable. And, like a deaf man in company, who only "looks at conversation," so they only come to be spectators of some minister's devotions. And, as might be

well supposed, it is a spectacle at which they are very apt to tire. Probably during the prayer you will see the audience doubled about in all conceivable postures, seeking for the poor relief of changing the place and keeping the pain. For as looking at conversation is not very entertaining to a deaf man, so *looking at worship*, which to such persons is about as blank of real significance, is not an exercise which is very absorbing. Such a congregation will be very likely to dwindle, till it leaves its minister to pray alone. It will result very much as in the case of a nervous man I once knew of, who had such a dread of crowds that he reversed the common rule, and never went to meeting except on rainy Sundays; but he soon found that a cloud no bigger than a man's hand was quite sufficient to secure to him the most ample accommodations at church; and by and by he found it perfectly safe to venture out in the clearest sunshine of a May morning.

But if this idea of God becomes vague, if it shades off into dimness and darkness, it is not the worship alone that degenerates into formalism. The church music will not be expressive of the soul's deep breathings towards God, — not the liquid melodies struck forth from hearts whose strings are swept by the breezes of God's spirit, but a quantity of noise articulated by rule; and the judgment denounced by the prophet will come upon such a people, though in a little different way, — "The songs of Zion shall be turned into howling." The sermon will not be preached, or listened to, for the calm unfolding of the great truths of religion, — for what truth is there to be unfolded, where the source of all truth is not apprehended? Preaching is then simply the exhibition of a man's powers of utterance, no matter whether he has any thing to utter or not; for its object will not be so much to fill the understanding with light, as to fill the room

with sound. The most approved kind of preaching will be that which somebody has called, rather bluntly, of the "trip-hammer style"; and the audience will think they have been most powerfully wrought upon, not when their hearts have been moved by truth, but when their ears have been thumped with words.

Such is the merest external worship, where the central light of the soul has gone out, where its inner life has ebbed away, and the forms are all that remain. And it would be interesting to follow up this inquiry, and see how this external worship always allies itself with an external morality; how works become dead; how the spirit of religion withdraws from the market-place, the exchange, the shop, and the field; how heaven is regarded, not as a present realization, but a place off somewhere in the skies, to which we must work our passage by good deeds on the earth.

But the idea of God may be clearly, yes, awfully distinct, and yet be false. It is very apt to be so, when a mind merely carnal becomes suddenly wrought upon, and brings its carnal thoughts into religion. Then God is worshipped because he is feared, and the main object, both of religion and worship, will be to turn aside his wrath and make him placable. To seek the service of God for ends distinct from the service itself, — this is the vicious element which lurks in every form of superstition, whether Pagan or Christian. Why, I have attended public worship where the gloom might be felt; where it seemed wicked to be cheerful and happy; where "My thoughts on awful subjects roll" was set to music; where the people seemed trying to twist their faces into the worst expression; where the speakers did not seem so much to speak themselves, as to be spoken out of, as out of sepulchres. And then I thought of the songs of the redeemed; of the harpers, harping with their harps; of the vials full of odors sweet; and I could not but ask myself, Is

this the worship which is to prepare these people for the ritual above?

I do not here describe that state of mind which every true penitent has experienced, when he lies broken-hearted before God, and feels that his sins are greater than he can bear. The sinner must experience this, before that exceeding peace which comes on afterwards like the sunshine when the storm is done. But I describe a mood of mind which, under false worship, becomes habitual; in which God is seen as a Sovereign, but not as a Father; as one who will save us from penal flames, for the faith which we hold, and the praises which we sing. Now, it is not the worst influence of such a ritual, that it makes the worshipper unhappy. It has no power to cleanse the heart and sweeten the deep fountains of its love. The idea which we have of God has a reflex influence upon our minds, and is moulding our characters day by day. If he be conceived of as capable of anger or vindictiveness, even towards the sinner, the very prayer which the worshipper breathes towards him will come back and distil in drops of poison over the heart, till all its sweet and tender charities have withered away. We have here the origin of most of the bigotry and the persecutions that have disgraced the Church. You can tell the votary of such worship as soon as you meet him in the streets and hear the tones of his greeting. You know him by the shape of his visage, by the acid which is diffused over it, which circulates through his blood, and lurks in his nasal tones. Under the grim shadows of such a theocracy, all the by-play of life is hushed; humor has no freaks of drollery; wit has no sallies, genius no variant life and action; laughter need not hold its sides; and the children cease to frolic on the green. More than all, the depravity of man is not removed out of the heart, but frozen into it, and fixed there for ever. The morality which allies itself with such a worship has no warmth and

glow, and breathes none of the fragrancy of love. It is not Christian, but Jewish. The relation of man with man, and neighbour with neighbour, is not the tie on which life's clustering charities do hang as its chief beauty and adornment. There is the cold hand and the strange eye. Works are not the clothing of the religious spirit as in beautiful garments, but the eye service in which the subject of a stern sovereign drudges at his toil.

And as these are the conceptions of the mere natural man who makes God altogether such a being as himself, so all his ideas of religion, which gather and organize around his idea of God, will be shaped and colored by it. Hell will be a dungeon, which God has dug for his children, and where he shuts them in to their shrieks and tortures, — not a development out of evil natures, which have perverted their own laws. Heaven will be a place to which some are admitted by special appointment, — so carnally conceived of, that it cannot be fully entered and enjoyed, till the dead bodies in the church-yards have been shaken from their sleep and lifted up into it! — not the sons of God made manifest to each other, — not the things of the sanctified spirit mirrored forth in all heavenly scenery, in the very midst of which she shall find herself, as soon as these walls of flesh have tumbled down. Earth will be profane, for its scenery of blossomed vales, and quivering leaves, and crooning waters, and spangled firmaments, will not seem the manifestations of *such* a God; he once made all these things, but he is not in them, flinging his glory out of them, as out of the bush of Moses, making the ground wherever we stand too holy, almost, to be trodden by sandalled feet. Salvation is not in works, and so our week-day duties are not sacred. It is only Sunday exercises that become sacred, and life out of churches is only a pilgrimage, — notions contrasting strangely with what Jerome says of his times; for he lived far towards the golden

morning of Christianity: — "You could not go into the fields but you might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine-dresser singing David's psalms."

Now you will quite mistake me, if you suppose that I am exhibiting either of these conceptions of the Divine Being, or the worship that is founded on them, as belonging exclusively to any class of men, or any denomination of my fellow-Christians. And yet I am candid to say, that I think all the sects are in constant danger of relapsing into one or the other, and do relapse into them, just in the degree that worldliness and naturalism invade them. The true origin of these false and dismal views of the Divine Being has, I think, been well described by Milton, in one of his eloquent prose tracts upon the religion of his times. "Out of question," says he, "from her perverse conceiting of God, and holy things, the soul had fallen to believe no God at all, had not custom and the worm of conscience nipped her incredulity. Hence, to all the duties of evangelical grace, instead of the cheerful and adaptive boldness which our new allegiance with God requires, came servile and thrall-like fear. For, in very deed, the superstitious man by his good will is an atheist; but being scared from thence by the pangs and gripes of a boiling conscience, all in a pudder he shuffles up to himself such a God and such a worship as is most agreeable to remedy his fear; which fear of his, as also is his hope, fixed only upon the flesh, renders likewise the whole faculty of his apprehension carnal."

From the worship of formalism and the worship of fear, turn we now to the worship of love. And do we doubt that there is such a vision of God vouchsafed to the humble and true worshipper, as gives an abiding sense of his presence, and unveils the Divine charms so clearly, that the soul drinks in delight and purity every hour? If you doubt this, you

doubt both the promises of God and their fulfilment in the experience of the best minds in all ages. Indeed, what is the mission of Christ, what the end of Christianity, but to bring back into the soul this vanishing image of the Supremely Good and Fair? What is the life of Christ, but an EXPRESSION OF GOD? And why was the Word made flesh, but so to unveil Him, that the worshipper might look up through the cloven heavens, and see one God in one person, and make that the one great, undivided reality of the soul? The pure in heart shall see God. I know the vision is not given at once. It is after struggles with indwelling sin; after prayers and watchings; after self has been crucified and slain; after the Scriptures have been read in devout mood, till the letter is transfigured and made bright by the Divine meaning within; till Christ has been looked upon and meekly followed as a revelation of the indwelling Father. Then the light of God's countenance comes streaming on like the dawn of the morning, at first faint and distant, —

> "I see from far thy beauteous light,
> Inly I sigh for thy repose," —

but coming on apace till it shines full-orbed, and plays into every nook and corner, and we look round upon a world a-glow.

When the idea of God thus clearly outlined has once been dropped into the mind and cherished as its abiding light, it never goes out, but sheds sunshine over all the faculties. But God must be to us a *person*, and not an abstraction, else the idea shades off into pantheism and into nothing. He must be *one* person, and not many, else there is a conflict of thought, and distraction of mind. And not only one person, but he must impersonate *Eternal Love*, else he does not warm and regenerate our souls. ONE GOD IN ONE PERSON, AND THAT PERSON OUTBREATHING ESSENTIAL LOVE, — when our minds lie calm and lowly beneath him, he will make his own image in our breasts, just as the sun loves

to look into the placid lake and make his image there. And there it remains, and there it burns, and then we worship, for we cannot help it. We worship all the while, for the image can never go out. We pray without ceasing. The soul always yearns after union with God, and always finds it, and this *is* worship. Yes, further; since our idea of God is central and plastic, and organizes all our other ideas about it, our souls become the mirror on which God pencils his whole system of truth, so that our minds, when peaceful and lowly, are not only the lake that images back the sun, but the whole firmament besides, when above and beneath

"Two equal heavens with rival splendors glow."

Worship becomes now more than an expedient which a man employs to gain the happiness of the life to come, for the heavens every hour are passing into his soul. His religion knows no declensions and no revivals; but the idea of God thus lodged within him makes it day in his breast, and sheds through his whole being the still fervors of noon. He worships always, like those men of primitive times that Jerome speaks of. When he lies down at night, there mixed up with all his thoughts his loved idea lies, and when he wakes in the morning he finds himself in prayer.

You see the influence of such a worship on the whole life and character. Fear is now cast out; the hope of reward hath no place, for the present realization of God is its own reward, and its heaven commencing now. The love of God so touches and fills the heart, that it brims over with delight in doing God's will. Obedience is sweet to the soul as light is to the eye, and sin, not merely in its consequences, but in its commission, is bitter as death, and loathsome as the grave. The joys and fervors of religion are not gained by chafing up the soul by external appliances. They are not an exultation at escape from punishment, but a blissful experience of God's abiding presence. In such a presence worship is

not a sombre ritual, but the spontaneous motion and play of all the faculties, leaping up towards God, like the children shouting hosannas and strewing palms in the way of Jesus. It is love communing with love, — the sons of God shouting for joy; its praises, uttered because they will not be repressed, like the song of the summer bird that carols to the rising sun.

When God has thus come into the heart, and made it full and overflowing with his own love, he drives out of it the whole gang of selfish lusts and appetites, and brings down into it the whole band of heavenly affections. From such a worship we go out and mingle with the world, with new feelings towards every thing that breathes. Deeds of justice, and offices of kindness, become the most touching and beautiful ritual. Every deed is a song of love out of the heart; yes, the whole life flows on as a canticle of praise. From such a communion with the one God, if the reformer would go out to his work, how changed were his whole aspect and bearing! Instead of going out to empty his bosom of its corroding gall, he would go with angel sympathies welling out of it, melting all hearts into tenderness, changing evil tempers by its sweet contagion, and charming the demons to repose. The chains of the captive would fall off, not amid blood and carnage, but as by the touch of the angel in Peter's cell. Not an ill-tempered and scolding philanthropy, but a mercy fragrant with Divine goodness, would come where our fallen nature lies broken and bleeding, and bend over it and pour in the oil and the wine. From such a worship the bigot would go away with the scowl smoothed out of his brow; in his hard eye would be the dew of tenderness, and for the clang of his dogmas shall come the free bearing of all generous and magnanimous virtues. In short, when our love is supplied from such a source, it courses through all the relations of domestic and social life, opens living springs through all its deserts, and makes them blossom as the rose.

"Hark! 't is the music of a thousand rills!
Some through the groves, some down the sloping hills,
Winding a secret or an open course,
And all supplied from one eternal source."

You see what the morality will be that allies itself with such a worship. Works will not be done to gain or to merit heaven, but to express and communicate the heaven beginning now. You will obey the commandments because you love them, because you see the moral law all perfect and beautiful, and long to have it applied in the practices of the actual world. All the ties and relations that put man in connection with his fellow-man will be regarded as the bonds on which the heavenly charities, wrought inly by the grace of God, may be conducted along. Business and labor are fragrant with the life of charity. Bargains are the mutual exchange of mutual blessings. The life and the love wrought into the soul by such a worship seek to be breathed outward into all social and civil affairs, and transfigure them with their own beneficence and beauty. In fine, I cannot put the matter better than in the words of Cudworth, who says: — "The fear of hell or the hope of heaven, the outward law of works, though it work in us some outward conformity to God's commandments, and so hath a good effect upon the world; yet we are all the while but dead instruments of music, that sound sweetly and harmoniously when they are only struck and played upon from without, by the musician's hand, who hath the theory and law of music within himself. But the living law of the Gospel, the law of the spirit of life within us, is as if the soul of music should incorporate itself with the instrument, and live in the strings, and make them of their own accord dance up and down and warble out their harmonies."

But you will tell me, perhaps, I have only described the

worship of perfect men, or of angels. How, you will ask, can we attain to such a worship and such a ritual, with our burden of imperfection, with our load of guilt weighing us down, — conviction of sin cutting through our hearts, penitence streaming from our eyes like rain? I answer, this is the very state of mind in which most deeply we want God. For then we want purity and peace. And we want the true God; not one who shall scare us into outward conformity, but who shall make all things new within us. When sorrow for sin hangs heaviest upon us, we want to go and lean upon the Divine bosom, and feel the great throbbings of its love. We want that love formed and imaged within us, that it may cast out our old lusts and appetites, by what Chalmers calls the expulsive power of a new affection. In short, we want worship, for it is this which, though after long strivings and self-denials, places within this idea of God, makes it grow, and warm, and brighten into the great sun of our being, till it chases all our darkness, and melts all our selfishness away.

Without God, without clear and spiritual views of his nature, repentance itself is black melancholy or boding despair. It makes us keep our hands from sinning, but it does not plant the life of God in the soul, and make it a new creation. But with such a view of God, repentance is the "soft effacing rain" that washes all the stains out of the soul, and God is revealed in it, as the sun shining down through the dripping trees and making Nature seem lovely in her tears.

I have thus endeavoured to develop the true idea of worship, contrasting what is formal and what is false with what is spiritual and true. And I am impressed every day with the idea, that this subject, though to some minds refined and mystical, is one which needs most to be clearly unfolded and urged upon men; out of which life and salvation are to come and be transfused through all the activities of society. The spectacle which society now presents might well fill a contem-

plative mind with anxiety. For we see religion severed from life, piety having no direct connection with affairs, theology more an expedient to get men into heaven, than to bring heaven down into them, and fling its radiance and its blessedness all over the earth. Under the very eaves of our churches, man hunts his brother, and becomes "a wolf to man." War lets loose its dogs and its furies. Covetousness plies its traffic and clutches its gains, making good bargains by turning things the best side up, and the fairest side out, then goes to meeting on Sunday with sober countenance "to con its liturgies and its lurries," and begin the same life anew on Monday morning. The reformer goes out to his work, bearing in his bosom the germs of the very evils he would remove; for his zeal is not God's life in the soul warming towards his brother, but the blazing up of the lurid fires of self-love. Religion is demure and grim, retreating into the dim light of conventicles and conference-rooms, while the great world lieth outside unblessed of its presence. It seeks more to run all opinions in its iron moulds, than to set free the heart's frozen affections, that they may play in a thousand jets and streams over all the scenes of daily life, and make them fresh and green. The young do not grow up as of old within the bosom of the Church, and look up to her as their nursing mother; rather do they grow up, not seeking so much to get religion, as waiting for religion to get them. The churches sink into coldness and lethargy, to be waked up periodically by social appliances and frantic preachers, living not by God's abiding spirit, but living by fits of fever and ague. Piety is not free, warm, and genial. The Church has not a piety in the singular, but pieties in the plural, each wearing the label of the sect out of which it comes, each moulded and stiffened within the iron dogmas of its own school, shunning contact with every other, lest its sharp angles should be worn away. When a man dies, the

chief anxiety is, how he felt, and what he said last, and whether he was got to heaven by some sacred magic in his sick-room; not how the whole river of his years hath flowed on, and channelled its bed, and rolled into the eternal sea.

These remarks indicate, I think, the deep and crying wants of society, and they show that these wants lie deeper than either reformers or religionists are apt to suppose. They show that little can be done by attacking and killing off this or that evil in detail, so long as the central light has become darkened, and the most interior life has become cold. We want a new development out of the very heart of Christianity, a new unfolding of its fundamental truths, brought home to us with a power never felt before, — a power not so much to break us into outward conformity and Sabbath-day solemnity, as to regenerate the heart, and make all its issues clean. The Church needs a worship that shall bring God so near, and unveil his countenance so clearly, and image it so distinctly, that he shall shed over it a perpetual noon, beneath whose beams all minds shall warm and fertilize and grow unto perfection; not a worship whose God is afar off, or asleep, or on a journey, for whose visitings the Church must wait till He comes round again. We want God so apprehended as to be an abiding light, an abiding spirit, an abiding love, melting its way into the heart every hour, — felt when we work and when we rest, when we laugh and when we pray, and thus flinging over our homes and workshops, our markets and farms, the steady splendors of his omnipresence. This done, we need not fear the rest. Such a religion, thus put into the heart and bringing God into the inner life of society, will find its way outward through all its affairs; for the life at the centre will go pulsing through all the extremities. And in every church, and in every home, and in every place of business, we should breathe the balmy odors of the returning Gospel.

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REPENTANCE

THE

CONDITION OF FORGIVENESS.

By GEORGE E. ELLIS.

PRINTED FOR THE

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REPENTANCE THE CONDITION OF FORGIVENESS.

It is the object of the pages which follow to affirm the great Christian doctrine, that repentance restores to the Divine favor, and puts a penitent into as acceptable a state towards God, as if he had never committed sin.

The title which the Saviour gives to the religion proclaimed by him is "the Gospel." That word means "good news," or "glad tidings." The original Greek word is singularly beautiful in expressing that sense. To our Saxon ancestors, from whose language the word "Gospel" comes, it conveyed the idea of joyful and cheering intelligence from the skies. The familiar use of the word may have obscured to us the idea of Christianity as a religion of glad and welcome revelations. The element of joy and delight in its message may have been forgotten. We must revert to that pleasing and kindling revelation of "good news" which it brings to us, and must look in the Gospel for some glorious disclosure of Divine benignity, so eminent and sublime as to warrant its auspicious meaning.

There are many bright truths in the Gospel message, which to the softened heart that enters into their experience

bear the most cheering influence. The peace and hope and calm reliance of the heart are the best assurance that it has found in the Gospel a priceless blessing. Without referring to the other delightful lessons by which the Gospel has cheered the human heart, and introduced it to sources of happiness, of which we can find no trace in the unchristian ages and scenes of this earth, let us confine ourselves to the doctrine already proposed.

It is impossible to exaggerate or overstate the importance and effect which are ascribed to repentance, to sincere, thorough, and radical repentance, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. The sole sufficiency of true repentance is one of the greatest and most vital doctrines of the Gospel, — one of its most original and peculiar doctrines. While we have the New Testament in our hands, and can read it, let us resolve that no human creeds, no theological speculations, no cunning systems of man's device, shall ever obscure for us the glory of the Gospel, — the free Gospel of the grace of God, which calleth upon all men everywhere to repent; which connects with repentance full remission of sins; which makes the goodness of God to lead us to repentance, and which most positively asserts that godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. This is the Gospel which we need, which we can understand, which we can obey and comply with, and it is the Gospel which Jesus Christ has brought us from God, which makes his message to be indeed glad tidings of great joy. Repentance, — that is the doctrine which needs to be preached in this world; and if it is not put foremost, it will not have justice done to it. It stands foremost and supreme among all human obligations, — among all the conditions of salvation in the Gospel. It was the first word of the Gospel; for in the morning twilight of Gospel times, before the Sun of Righteousness appeared above the horizon, — as its first beam

shot upwards into the atmosphere of a sinning world, — John the Baptist, the forerunner, preached, "Repent ye! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Messiah held that message ever on his lips. And with what solemnity and power, — with what strength of authority, with what tenderness of appeal, did he speak it everywhere, whether to the haughty hypocrites that scowled upon him, or to the woman who was a sinner that sat at his feet. He never exempted any one from the duty of repentance; he never qualified the effect of repentance, or implied that God asked any thing more of men. With that message he addressed the multitude; with it he converted Peter; he illustrated it by the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son; he applied it directly to one of the malefactors who was crucified beside him on Calvary. That message he gave to the Apostles; and they preached it, calling upon men everywhere to repent, — to turn from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God, — to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out. And just so far as those who heard the Gospel complied with its message of repentance were they converted and saved. The Gospel addresses us all as sinners. And so we are, every man and every woman, sinners; not by birth, for then the responsibility would lie with our Creator; but sinners because of our willing, or unresisting yielding to sin; sinners, by our own folly, or misconduct, or heedlessness; sinners, because we do wrong when we could do right; sinners, because we allow bad feelings, purposes, and habits to rule us when we might repress them. It is this which makes us sinners, all; and being sinners, that is, guilty of sin which God forbids and hates, we must repent of sin before he can accept us, and when we do repent, he forgives us.

There is no technical, mysterious doctrine of theology involved in that simple but melancholy statement, that we are

all sinners. It is a matter of consciousness with us. We know that we are sinners, because we know that we do wrong where we might do right. Our own knowledge of ourselves, our experience every day, tells us that we are sinners. The saddest and darkest feature of our sinfulness is, that we know and understand so well just in what our sinfulness consists, and can so easily trace it to our own folly, or wilfulness, or passion. The moment any one begins to tell us that we have a sinful nature, are born with a taint of wickedness in us, that moment we begin to feel easier about it. Our self-condemnation is relieved, as soon as we look upon sin as being any thing else than wilful transgression. Refer our sin to Adam's disobedience, and then the utmost feeling that we can connect with our share in it will be, that we are suffering a great misfortune, precisely the same as if we were inheriting an infirm constitution from our parents. It is our consciousness of wilful transgression, — our own individual, daily, yearly, life-long neglect to obey the law written in our hearts and consciences, — it is this that gives the deepest sense of sin. We might know that we were sinners without a revelation; we need a revelation to show us the way of repentance, and to attach to repentance the promise of a full pardon. This is the glory of the religion of Jesus Christ. It addresses itself to those who know that they are sinners, — not from misfortune, but from actually doing wrong, — and it promises them full pardon on sincere repentance.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Joy in God's presence, caused by the repentance of a human being on the earth, must convey to us the intimation that such repentance is all that he desires. We cannot hesitate, therefore, to receive something like the following as a statement of Christian doctrine. Human beings are created by God with the elements of a moral

nature, capable of good and of evil. They are endowed as beings must be endowed in order to be capable of free agency. So far as they do right, they do not feel any reproaches; so far as they do what they know to be wrong, they do feel reproaches, — till they may do so much of wrong, slowly, gradually, and habitually, as to grow up sinners, — some more so, and some less so, — but all sinners. Sin is a mountain-load of guilt to some, and admits of all degrees. Whoever is not conscious of sin does not need, or at least cannot appreciate, the Gospel. Jesus said, — "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance; they that are well need not the physician, but they that are sick." With this sense of sin within us, we take up the holy lessons of the Gospel and the law of God. As we read, we see what he requires, and justly requires, of us; we have a clearer idea of duty, and know that we might do our duty. Then our sense of sin becomes more vivid, more painful, more reproachful. It stings us deeper. We begin to ask the consequences of such sin. They are alienation from God, unhappiness, hopelessness, and ruin. The whole truth of these consequences presses more sadly upon us as we read the pure pages of Gospel truth and duty. But now light breaks upon the dark prospect; a light which brings its comfort to those whose secret hearts alone accuse them, and a light which sheds one beam of holy hope and peace through the cells of the prison to those whose hearts and hands and lives are blackened with the foulest and most awful guilt. It is the light of that precious, that blessed doctrine, that unspeakable gift of the New Covenant, which says, — "Repent, and your sins shall be forgiven!" Yes, forgiven, — freely and fully forgiven! Not laid upon some other person, not paid for and punished by some substituted victim, but forgiven; forgiven once for all, — blotted out, never

more to be mentioned ; never more to be regarded as a debt to justice ; never more to be recalled by God against you. And if the memory that you had been a sinner should rise up to distress you, as if with the lingerings of remorse, the momentary pang shall be soothed by the remembrance that you have also repented and been forgiven. So precious is the Christian doctrine.

But there is a prevailing view of Christian theology which maintains that simple repentance on the part of a sinner is not enough to secure what the Gospel calls *salvation*, that is, deliverance from the penalty of sin, and pardon from God. Dogmatists have long asserted very positively, that Divine justice cannot be thus easily satisfied ; that it would not be safe for God to forgive merely on repentance. It is amazing to observe with what complacence and assurance some theologians have undertaken to pronounce upon what would or would not be safe for God to do, or right or easy for him to do. Nothing is more frequently met with in a class of religious writings than a sentence like this : — " It would not be consistent or safe for God to pardon a sinner without satisfaction, or without some more satisfaction than that of repentance, however sincere and thorough it might be." And why not ? we may ask. Why not ? Is it for us to dictate terms to the Almighty, and to measure his mercy ? How preposterous it is for men to presume to say what God can or cannot do ; what he will or will not do ; how much or how little will appease him ! And as to repentance not being satisfaction enough for God, we might well ask, What room there is for mercy, if any thing more than repentance is required ? We are taught in the Lord's prayer to say, — " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." And how do we forgive those who trespass against us ? We expect their regret, their sorrow, their

readiness to do all that they can to make amends, and then we pardon them, or ought to pardon them. We certainly do not call it forgiving them, when we exact a penalty in their behalf from some other person. A creditor surely does not pardon a debtor, when he calls for and receives his full due from a bondsman or indorser.

But what says the holy record, the word of the Master? "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." When the poor servant in the parable fell at the feet of his master, and said, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all," we read that the kind lord who is presented to our imitation "was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

Such is the whole strain of Christian instruction; that mercy consists in forgiving the penitent, and that repentance is the sufficient condition for the Divine pardon.

We next put the question to a class of theologians, Why should you and we read the New Testament so differently? We find there asserted, over and over again, as a most prominent and vital doctrine of the Gospel, the truth so beautifully presented in the parable of the Prodigal Son, — that repentance insures forgiveness. You say that we are fatally deceived; we ask, therefore, What more do you find in the same records? What other condition is annexed to forgiveness?

We know very well what the answer will be. It will be said that faith in Jesus Christ is often connected in the New Testament with the promise of forgiveness. This is very true. Whoever has eyes to see may read it. But what does this faith in Christ mean? In what way, or sense, or man-

ner, is it connected with, or made to qualify, repentance as the ground of forgiveness and salvation? Strange and deplorable beyond expression it is, that what seems so plain in the New Testament should be so mystified and darkened. Faith in Jesus Christ is connected with this doctrine of forgiveness. But how? Why, it is a belief in him as teaching this doctrine, as authorized to teach it, and a belief of the doctrine because he teaches it. We are required to have faith in him who tells us that God will forgive the penitent; to believe the teacher and the doctrine.

The whole truth is covered by this condition, — that the faith, belief, confidence, or trust which we are required to extend to Christ, means an acceptance of him as authorized to teach this very doctrine, this gracious and glorious doctrine, which no one, except inspired by God, would be authorized to teach, — that God forgives and saves the sinner when he repents of his sin. We believe Jesus Christ, when we believe what he teaches us about sin, and repentance, and salvation. Can faith in Christ be made to mean intelligibly any thing more than this?

How plain is the condition, that heartily to receive such a doctrine requires that we confide in the teacher of it. No principle is more familiar to us than this. A father says to a child, — "Have confidence in me, if you would regard my counsels aright. Believe that I can and will be your best counsellor." A teacher says to a pupil, — "Trust to me, that my lessons are true, useful, necessary; for if you do not regard me you will slight my lessons." The physician says to a patient, — "Have faith in me, in my treatment, in my directions, in my knowledge of your case; for if you do not, I shall work in the dark, and your distrust will interfere with my efforts." So it is that all lessons, instruction, guidance, and help of every kind, require for their full effect a

hearty confidence on our part in the teacher, the adviser, the friend who offers to aid us. Jesus Christ assures us in his Gospel, that he was sent from God to be the Saviour of the world, and he declares that the sinner who repents shall be saved. Any body might assert that doctrine. But in order that so precious a doctrine may be heartily believed, and the rich comfort of it may be enjoyed, we must have confidence in him who teaches it, and must believe that he is authorized to teach it. And whoever comes to us with this doctrine, and proves his commission from God, must have our hearty confidence; our faith will cling to him in reverence, and love, and joy; and in proportion as we value the doctrine shall we believe in him, and in all that he reveals and promises. This is a full and fair explanation of the fact, that faith in Jesus Christ is sometimes asserted, and always implied, in connection with his great doctrine of pardon to the penitent. So we find that when Jesus himself taught the doctrine, he asked of his hearers that they should have faith in him. When the Apostles preached the doctrine, they too required faith in him who taught it. They thus announced their message: — "We call upon you to repent of all your sins, and to believe Jesus Christ as declaring truly that such repentance will insure your salvation. To as many as receive him, he giveth power to become the sons of God. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

It is true, then, that faith in Jesus Christ is sometimes by express mention, and always by implication, connected with the doctrine of forgiveness on repentance. We, however, regard faith in Christ as a *warrant* of the doctrine, while those who differ with us insist that it is a *qualification* of the

doctrine, involving another and a very different condition, — a sort of mystical or mysterious and inexplicable idea about the sufferings and death of Christ, as necessary to make up the deficiency of repentance, and to be added to it, to render it effective for salvation.

So plain to us is the Christian doctrine, to be received through faith in Christ, that God pardons the penitent, that we can find no qualification attached to it. When, therefore, we hear it said that repentance is not satisfaction enough to God, we can but urge sentence after sentence from the Scriptures, to prove, on the authority of Christ, that it is enough. And then it becomes us to lay all possible stress upon the necessity of that sole condition of repentance. We must be sure that we know what repentance means, and that we understand its work.

We shall always find, that those who assert that repentance is not enough to assure forgiveness will undervalue repentance, will speak slightingly of it, calling it mere regret, or uneasiness, or sorrow for sin, and will fail to do justice to the full Scripture meaning of repentance. Any under-estimate, any depreciation of repentance, as not enough to restore harmony between God and man, must always spring from a very imperfect idea of what repentance is, — of what it means, — of its secret, inner work upon the heart, of its deep and powerful agency upon the soul, of its long effect, of its perfect influence, and of its tremendous spiritual and moral agency. Those who say repentance is not enough, never do full justice to what repentance is. Some even speak of it with contempt, as worth but very little. If such persons are allowed to give their own view of repentance, and that a slighting and very imperfect view, it is no wonder that they attribute to it but little value. The question, however, is, What is the Christian view of repentance? We must be sure

that we have this view of it. The Prodigal Son repented; the thief on the cross repented; the woman that anointed the feet of Jesus repented; Simon Peter repented; Saul, afterwards called Paul, repented; and they were all forgiven. What was repentance in them?

We cannot tell what passed in their secret hearts; we can infer it only from what passes in our own hearts. The process and workings, feeling by feeling, of repentance, are nowhere described in the New Testament. Only the great effect, with some of the agonies and throes of the spirit, the regrets, relentings, and tender meltings of the heart, are there incidentally intimated to us. We learn from those sacred pages, and from the Old Testament also, enough to assure us of this truth, — that repentance, according to the Scriptures, is no light or trivial process, which dogmatic theology may pronounce to be of little worth; but that it is the most solemn and severe experience through which a human being can pass. He that has known what it is to repent, knows that it is no trivial process. All the bitter things of life have nothing so bitter as the bitterness that enters into repentance; and all the delights of life have nothing so sweet as the peace which follows repentance.

Better than all the pictures which fancy can paint is that still undimmed, unfaded narrative from the blessed lips of the Saviour, — the story of the Prodigal Son. We see it all there. The smiling home of innocence and childhood, the father's house, where plenty and joy would have satisfied the contented and the pure, opens the scene; and we see the younger son go out of it, well furnished to prepare another as happy home if he so choose. But he goes forth uneasy, restless, burning with strong and unchecked passions. We follow him through recklessness, and vice, and shame, to poverty, and deep abasement, and abject wretchedness. In

the bitterness of his spirit, that child of God, though surrounded by swine whose very food he craves, repents. To repent is to retrace one's steps. And those steps retraced lead back again to a happy home, with its glad welcome. True, the elder brother stands scowling at a distance, and says that repentance is not enough. But not so says the father. He says it is enough.

And who can doubt that this process has been all faithfully repeated in many sinful hearts. Far distant from us and from their early homes are many wanderers now; wanderers alike from home and from innocence, feeding swine, — their own swinish appetites, — debased, and foul, and deeply wretched, too, in sin. So long as that sin is committed and indulged in, misery and ruin, as sure as the grave, stand in the pathway of their doom. But the very moment that repentance begins its work, sweet peace promises at a distance, and an unwonted joy flashes at intervals through the agonized breast. Among the wandering sinners, far away, are there not some at least who know the bitterness of repentance, and either there, or at home once more, shall share the joy of a restoration to virtue? We cannot watch and know the process of repentance in any other human heart. But we know that there is such a process, and the process is of such a nature, and works such an effect, that we can believe that a merciful Father can bestow upon it his full pardon. Only it must be thorough, complete, and sincere, and of that the Omniscient Eye can judge. And all manner of sin may be forgiven to men on repentance. Even the bars of the murderer's cell cannot exclude the invisible angel which ministers to the heart through repentance. A brother's blood has stained that heart, and murder was the full fruit of many bad passions that had been ripening on from boyhood for that very deed. But the days passed in that cell are divided

into hours, and those hours into minutes, and those minutes into seconds; and there may be much of thought, much of bosom conflict, many bitter pangs, and slow relentings, and deep heart-strugglings, in each one of those seconds of time; and how much may they work upon the spirit, in their whole sum of bitter agonies, and melting remembrances, and earnest, burning petitions sent up from a crushed, and softened, and penitent heart to God the Father of all mercies. It is not for us to judge or to decide. But we can believe that there is repentance for all, and mercy for all who do repent.

Repentance is a tremendous process, deep, mysterious, curative, restorative to the soul. If we needed any thing more than is familiar to us, to indicate our origin from God, it should fix our revering, grateful faith in him to be reminded that, in the very constitution of our nature, he provided for us the sensibilities and nerves of heart and conscience, through which we might be capable of repentance. Why should we not say, that the highest token of the Divine benignity towards man consists in this, — that man is made capable of repentance? When the theologian tells us, that we are doomed to ruin because born with sinful natural tendencies, why can we not answer, that we were evidently born for redemption, because there are slumbering sensibilities within us which indicate our capacity for repentance? There is a similar provision in our bodily constitution. Air is necessary for our life, and the mouth and the nostrils are the organs for receiving air. But as some diseases to which we are liable may at once nearly close the mouth and the nostrils, even the ear, another organ, may serve a little in extreme emergency; for it is providentially furnished with a channel for the vital current. And so, too, even through the very skin and muscle of our bodies may sustenance be

administered through absorption, when food cannot be received through its ordinary organs.

Such a final resource have we in our inborn capacity for repentance, — our last, our best hope. Repentance, then, is a tremendous process. It argues the existence of restorative agencies within the soul itself. A process which can change the human heart, which can reverse the track of habit, which can make what seemed once most fair and attractive to be most odious and hateful, — a process which can work such a revolution down in the very depths of our being must be a radical, a thorough process. It can hardly be necessary to say, that this thorough process is not to be confounded with regret, or remorse, or self-compunction, or what is called improvement of character. Repentance embraces all these, and more, much more. It involves the viewing the sin that is repented of as an ungrateful and foul offence against a holy God, a wrong done to our own souls, a self-defiling and debasing thing; and, besides this, repentance is a scorching, burning process, which destroys all those roots and fibres that connect sin with the affections of the heart. And, finally, repentance is a process which out of the destruction of what is sinful calls forth, first in feebleness, but with a steadily strengthening growth, the germs of virtue. This thorough, radical process is what is called repentance in the New Testament, and it meets in full the mild demands of the Gospel.

It is, of course, implied, that the effect of repentance on man's spiritual nature is such as to restore its healthfulness, and to make it susceptible of a pure happiness. Then heaven begins in the soul, and if eternity does but prolong the joy which repentance imparts, salvation is complete.

The great question has long been pressing upon the minds of men, whether the Christian religion is a system of theologi-

cal subtilties and mysteries, or whether it is a clear, reasonable, intelligible code of high truths, plain duties, and merciful terms for our race. We believe that it has a transparent simplicity, a perfect self-consistency, and a sublime benignity. It is a remedial religion, — a religion designed to cure and save, to redeem sinners, and to fit human beings for heaven. It is rigid and uncompromising in its commandments; its voice of duty is firm and clear; its way is strait; its sanctions, — its sanctions, — every sinner knows what they are. And what is the measure of its benignity? Where does it reveal the tender love, the compassionate pity, the relenting grace of a father? It is here. "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him." "My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

It is a doctrine of the Gospel, that penitence has this full and perfect reward, leaving no penalty suspended, no debt to be paid; that repentance restores to the Divine favor, and puts a penitent into as good and acceptable a state as regards God, as if he had never sinned or done wrong. Some may ask, if this is not a dangerous doctrine; if it does not put the wrong-doer and the right-doer on the same level; and if many persons might not be induced by it to follow evil propensities and habits, intending when they have reached a certain age to renounce them, under the promise that repentance will completely restore them to an equality with those who have always been toiling on unswerving in the path of rectitude?

The assertion which I have made, that penitence in the Gospel is promised complete restoration, seems at first to be exposed to this objection. It might be enough to say, in answer to it, that, though penitence brought the evil and the good to the same level, it did no wrong to the good, and that

the risk whether an evil-doer would ever become a penitent made a sufficient distinction and difference between the wrong-doer and the upright.

But this is not the only answer to the objection. There is another, which involves a very important condition connected with penitence, and draws a wide distinction between it and an upright course. The restoration which the Gospel promises to penitence holds in regard to the favor of God and the enjoyment of a future life; but it does not hold in regard to our fellow-men and this life. It is the glory of the Gospel message, that a soul washed by penitence on earth shall stand by the throne of God robed in white raiment, its sins all remitted and remembered no more, fit for the companionship of the unsullied ranks of higher spirits. This is the tidings of joy to man. God shall entirely forgive and pardon; a penitential tear shall prove a most filial heart, and the downcast, sorrowing eye of the publican shall better pay all heaven's dues than the well-tithed hoards of the Pharisee. This, I say, is the glory of the Gospel message. It is a revealed doctrine resting on the authority of Jesus Christ, as teaching in the name of God. Heathen faith never dreamed of it, our own reason would not suggest it to us; indeed, we need to have it confirmed and sustained after it has been declared to us.

For what makes this doctrine as a doctrine of revelation all the more new and cheering to us is the fact, that we may believe it as regards God and the future life, while it is not taught us, and is not true, of this life. Penitence will, in a future state, completely restore us to God's favor. But penitence will never insure to a sinner complete restoration in this world as regards his fellow-men and this life. This is a distinction which enhances the good news of the Gospel message, while its limitation to God's favor and a future state

secures the doctrine from confounding a wicked and a righteous course of life in the same experience in this world. We must mark this distinction.

Repentance never can insure complete restoration in this world; it is not so promised; it is never so realized. The waste and misuse of any part of this life can never be supplied; the sins of mature years bear down their penalties to the grave's brink; the losses incurred by evil-doing are never balanced in this world's records. This is a solemn and impressive fact, which all experience verifies. It is the sufficient warrant for virtue and rectitude in this world, laying as broad as time and earthly fortunes can lay the foundation of an inviolable distinction between right and wrong. Upon this fact religious counsel to the young bases its strong appeals. Here religious wisdom begins its holy counsels. Think not to repair on earth, even in a life of seventy years, the sin or the folly of one single day. One evil action is a thorn planted in the pillow on which the head reposes to the last night of life. While the hair is changing from the dark locks of youth to the scanty and white remnant of age, the record of each misdeed is renewed from year to year in the heart's memory. While the body dies daily, that record lives, — lives to mortify and grieve us, to make silence noisy to the conscience, and to obtrude an unwelcome guest upon our loneliness. Better, far better, is it for a human being to do always right, even from the cradle; for all the wrong which he does is as enduring as his earthly existence. It accompanies life through to its close. It dwells in the conscious mind as a painful remembrance, and even if the mind lose its balance, it will enrobe one of the distorted visions of insanity. Repentance does not assure complete restoration in this life, and before our fellow-men. Let the young learn that truth from their elders. Repentance on earth softens,

purifies, and renews the heart. It opens a fountain of delightful joy; it sings a song of ransom, "a song of degrees." It brightens the future while it soothes the present, but it never blots out the past. Some of the consequences or results of sin abide in this life; they may not always be noted by others, but the penitent is always aware of them. A broken constitution, a wasted patrimony, a soiled soul, a burdened memory, a blighted name, a remorseful conscience, — is there on this earth, in this life, anywhere here, relief and indemnity against these? Nowhere; not in a single instance. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight; that which is wanting cannot be numbered." He that has not faithfully learnt the first lessons of all teaching shall feel the deficiency when he has reached the last lessons, — they will be harder than they would have been. He that has ever refused the right and done the wrong in any thing, has introduced into his account with life an error which runs through the long leger. Repentance, the truest and the deepest even, can never insure complete restoration in this life as regards man before his fellow-man. He can never wholly forgive and forget himself, nor find forgiveness and forgetfulness from them. In this solemn truth, the high appeals of rectitude are abundantly guarded as they address even infancy and youth, as well as manhood, on this earth.

But while this law of retribution holds on through life to sustain God's righteous empire here, it is relaxed in a future life to exalt his mercy there. This adds to the glory of the Gospel message, and increases its joy for us, as it declares a future life free from one of the saddest experiences of this, that is, the remaining sting of sin attending even penitence. The Gospel declares that true repentance here shall completely restore hereafter; that the whole penalty of sin shall be removed, with all its loss supplied, all its remorse forgot-

ten. This is the mystery — one mystery, at least — of the Gospel. We know not how it can be. We cannot understand it consistently with the power of memory, and the progression of mind and heart from earth to heaven. We cannot explain how so complete a distinction should attend our personal experience here and hereafter. But still the Gospel teaches the lesson; it is a glad and inspiring lesson, and we would give it our confidence as taught by God through Christ.

Yet we naturally ask for full proof that it is a Christian doctrine. We wish to have it confirmed by texts, and more by large, strong supports drawn from other great and consistent Gospel truths. Such proof we may find, for a doctrine like this, original with the Gospel, must have in the Gospel its abundant testimony.

It is usual to look for the support of Scripture doctrines by accumulating single texts which teach them. But how unsatisfactory is the attempt to establish any such doctrine, by picking out a few passages called verses, here and there scattered through the Scriptures. If the whole New Testament had been written as is the Book of Proverbs, in short sentences, unconnected, and complete in their meaning, this culling of texts might satisfy us. But these verses were divided for the mere convenience of references and commentaries; they break up the sense of Scripture, they may even be set over against each other to support contradictions, and therefore it is very unsatisfactory to us to gather arguments in such a form around a Christian doctrine. Such single passages, however, are very numerous, and will present themselves readily to the mind of a reader of Scripture, in support and illustration of the doctrine, that true repentance in this life shall completely restore a soul to the Divine favor in a future state.

Such a doctrine as this should not be argued as a matter of texts. It is one of the great, living lessons of the Gospel, breathed forth from the pervading spirit of the Gospel, taught and proved in the whole philosophy of the Gospel. We may select, from many attestations of the doctrine, two illustrative arguments for it.

I. From the relation of affection and mercy which is ascribed to God in the Gospel, we can believe that repentance will restore to his full favor. As a father to each of his children, God is there revealed with all the sympathies, tenderness, and full forbearance of a parent.

Now a father can regard a penitent and restored child as just as dear to him, as if he had never done wrong. The lingering remembrance of former estrangement is balanced in the parental heart by the delight of reconciliation. We can thus regard our own children, but we cannot thus regard others' children, or our own fellow-men. Here is the difference which parental affection naturally makes, for only through the parental relation is such a sentiment developed in its strength. The wrongs done us by those who have no affinity to us pain and irritate us the most. If they are redressed, we can forgive the wrong-doer, but can never feel toward him as before. We may overlook on the condition of their penitence all the injuries we have received from chance acquaintances and others in the casual concerns of life, but we can never give them after it our full and unqualified love. It is simply because we hold no affectionate relation to them; no natural, strong tie of heart identifies us with them. But when we turn from these cold relations of men with each other to the relation between a father and his children, we see a great difference wrought by penitence. The father's heart yearns towards his penitent child, and fastens its sympathies upon contrition as tenderly as it would

have done upon obedience. Whoever heard of a father disinheriting a child who, having been dissipated or vicious, had sincerely reformed, and had proved his new love before his father died? Men do not fully forgive each other, but parents do forgive their children. Violated trusts among men are withdrawn for ever, but wounded love always stands ready to renew its embraces when deserved.

Thus it is that the affectionate relation of a Father, in which God stands towards every human being, moves him to an exercise of unbounded mercy, such as men do not find here from each other. This beautiful truth is signified in the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the father, in his joy, stops the utterance of what his younger son intended to say, — that he might be received as a hired servant. The father checked the humiliating sentence, and fully restored his child, while the elder son was even angry that the penitent should be rejoiced over. How significantly are distinguished here the unrelenting feelings of men towards each other, and the entire pardon of parental love toward a child. This is one illustration of the Gospel truth, or mystery, that God as our Father will hereafter regard a penitent as fondly as if he had never gone astray, and grant him complete restoration.

II. We may find another illustration in support of that cheerful doctrine, in reflecting upon the change in our experience which must attend a removal from this world, where we have sinned and have repented, to another scene of being. Men accuse one another here, — we cannot think they will do so there. The inflictions caused by sin affect injuriously our common interests all through life; they mingle with all the rivalries and sorrows of existence, to grieve all more or less. We cannot wholly forgive or forget others' misdeeds, nor surmount the consequences of our own, because they are associated with this scene of being, affecting our tempo-

ral interests, our goods, our welfare, our health. They are identified with all earthly things.

When our relations are all transferred to other scenes, the soul may take a new start in its career, with freer impulses. Just as we awake each morning in life essentially the same beings, yet with some new motive and purpose, and with an untried opportunity before us, the use of which will modify all that we were previously, so may the morning after death present for us such new emotions, and offer us such different experiences, as to admit of a complete revolution in our consciousness. The transition from this life to a spiritual state, we may naturally suppose, will be attended by some marked alteration in the materials of our existence. It would be vain for us to define these possibilities. But we do not exceed the bounds of reasonable expectation when we say that heaven may obliterate the memories of evil, and may offer to the soul a contemplation of itself free from the scars which through life disclosed its conflicts with sin.

It is not for us to indicate how the power of God shall work out the purposes of his infinite love. The promise is given, and that is enough for us, — the promise that repentance is restoration.

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THE

PHILOSOPHIC ORIGIN

AND

HISTORIC PROGRESS

OF THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

By JOHN CORDNER.

U. S. L. DUPLICATE

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THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

A GLANCE at the theological world makes it sufficiently clear that the Sacred Scriptures are very generally regarded as not sufficiently definite and exact in their statements. Hence creeds and confessions have been drawn up, and very extensively employed as tests of orthodoxy in religion. To say that you believe the words of the Lord Jesus and his Apostles, as these are recorded in the pages of the New Testament, is far from being sufficient in the estimation of many persons. They will probably call you an infidel, unless you consent to receive their human interpretations of those words; thus putting their human interpretations on a level with the actual teaching of the blessed Christ himself. They construct a system out of their human reason interpreting the Scripture, and if you hesitate to accept this system, or venture to assail it, they forthwith raise the cry, that you are invading the mysteries of religion by your reason, when the simple truth is, that you are only exercising your understanding to keep clear of their errors. It is only human reason disputing the conclusions of human reason.

Thus, a certain theory of the Godhead has become prevalent and popular. By this theory the Supreme Being is rep-

resented as existing in three distinct and coequal persons. We take the liberty to question its soundness and deny its truth. What is the consequence? It is forthwith said that the Unitarians are unduly elevating human reason, — that we are vain of heart and proud of understanding. But what is the actual state of the case? Obviously this: the Trinitarian has constructed his theory of the Trinity by reasoning from the Scriptures, and the Unitarian only disputes that reasoning, and declines to accept its conclusions. The Unitarian still abides by the Scriptures. He holds the Bible in his hand, and says to the Trinitarian, "Point out to me where your doctrine of three persons in the Godhead is stated there, and I will receive it. You say there are three persons in the Godhead; you say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, equal in power and glory. Now, only show me such statements in the Bible, and I will receive them without further questioning." But the Trinitarian cannot do so. He has to resort to a process of comparison and reasoning to *construct* his doctrine. His comparisons we deem insufficient, and his reasoning unsatisfactory, and so we decline to accept his conclusions, and still demand a *Scripture statement* of the doctrine. He will probably present us with the Apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). But here we find no statement of three persons in one God. We find simply a pious parting wish uttered by the Apostle at the close of his Epistle, to the effect that the grace or favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God's love, and the blessed influences of God's Spirit, should abide with the Corinthians, to whom he wrote. Or the Trinitarian may present us with our Lord's commission to the Apostles, "Go ye and teach (make disciples of)

all nations, baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. xxviii. 19). But this is also defective for the purpose alleged; there is no statement of three persons in one God. The command is to baptize into the name of, or into the profession of faith in, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as the agencies and instrumentalities engaged in the origination, promulgation, and confirmation of the Gospel, — into the belief of the Father as the great Originator of the scheme of Christian salvation; of the Son, as the Messenger sent by the Father to announce it to the world; of the Holy Spirit, by whose active influence it was confirmed in the beginning by miracles and signs, and through which it is still confirmed in the hearts of the humble and the faithful.* Or possibly we may still be presented with the text of the "three heavenly witnesses," since we observe it is yet permitted to stand as a leading proof text in the Westminster Confession and Catechism. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1 John v. 7).

* The force of the Trinitarian argument here is supposed to lie in the collocation of terms, in conjunction with the fact that it occurs in a formula of baptism. With respect to the former, we say that collocation of terms is no proof of equality of the persons denoted by the terms. We read in 1 Chron. xxix. 20, that all the congregation "*worshipped the* LORD *and the king*." Here is a collocation of terms, by which Jehovah and the king are formally connected as objects of worship. But this does not prove the king coequal with Jehovah. Nor are we bound to infer that baptism into a given name implies the supreme deity of the person indicated by the name. The Jewish people "were all baptized unto *Moses*" (1 Cor x. 2). But Moses is not therefore to be regarded as Supreme God. It is only by a careful study and comparison of the general language of Scripture that we can avoid prevailing mistakes, and arrive at a truthful interpretation.

Here it may be thought the desired statement is made. Here the three alleged persons of the Trinity are named together and called "one." And this is the only place where such a statement is made within the covers of the Bible. But this text requires no remark from us, for it is not a genuine passage of Scripture. It is an acknowledged interpolation.*

The Trinitarian, then, cannot state his doctrine in Scripture language. To use the words of a Trinitarian theologian, it is "a doctrine of inference," i. e. a doctrine said to be drawn from the Scriptures by a process of inferential reasoning. This is the most which the Protestant Trinitarian theologian can claim for it. But this, again, is denied by the great majority even of those who accept the doctrine, and by the overwhelming majority of the Christian world. For the Roman Catholics are in the habit of denying that the doctrine of the Trinity can be proved from Scripture without the aid of tradition. "My belief in the Trinity is based

* Sir Isaac Newton has written a history of this "corruption of Scripture," to which we would willingly direct the attention of our readers. But as Newton was a Unitarian, it may be considered more desirable, perhaps, for present purposes, to produce the testimony of Trinitarians. So long ago, then, as 1809, the Eclectic Review pronounced 1 John v. 7 a "gross interpolation." Dr. Pye Smith, in his Scripture Testimony, styles this verse "spurious," and says, with reference to some who would assert its genuineness, that "the attempt to set aside the decision of impartial and honest criticism is painfully discreditable." Bishop Lowth says, "I believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his understanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of the verse 1 John v. 7." And Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, closes a lengthened dissertation on this verse in these words: — "In short, it stands on no authority sufficient to authenticate any part of a revelation professing to have come from God." Similar testimonies might be multiplied.

on the authority of the Church," says the Roman Catholic controversialist; "no other authority is sufficient." And the majority of Protestants in France and Germany reject the Trinity of the Athanasian creed, or Westminster Confession. We may say, indeed, that they reject a Trinity of persons under any form of statement. In the United States of America, there are probably three thousand congregations of Christians, under various names, who reject the Triune theory of the Godhead, and adhere to the strict Unity of the Deity. Now, when all this is considered, it will be seen that the Trinitarians who assert that the doctrine can be proved by a process of inferential reasoning from the Scriptures, form but a small minority. But we do not notice this fact as any argument against the truth of their system. It is not denied that the Unitarians are in the minority in the Christian world, and the Trinitarians in the great majority. But it is a circumstance well worthy of note by the candid inquirer, that by far the greater number of that Trinitarian majority do not rest their doctrine on *Scriptural grounds;* so that the case stands thus, — the overwhelming majority of the Christian world deny that the doctrine of the Trinity can be legitimately drawn from the Scriptures by any process of inferential reasoning; while there is no Trinitarian whatever, of any class, who pretends, or can pretend, that his doctrine is expressly stated in the Scriptures.

Now, we put the question in all earnestness to every serious and candid mind, — we would ask, Is it likely that in a volume of writings containing no fewer than sixty-six different treatises or books, as the Bible does, — we would ask, Is it likely that in such an extensive volume, avowedly written to instruct mankind in religion, there should be no statement of God's existence in three persons, if that doctrine

really formed any part of the faith of the writers? Surely, if the sacred writers had intended to teach the doctrine of *three persons in one God*, they would have written it somewhere in their sixty-six books. Well might the eminently pious Dr. Isaac Watts say, in his "Solemn Address to God,"—"Hadst thou told me plainly in any single text that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three real persons in thy Divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered by so many doubts." It was the obvious deficiency of such a statement which led Dr. Watts, in his later years, to set aside the doctrine of a tri-personal Deity. Now, suppose a number of "orthodox" theologians of the present day were requested to issue sixty-six treatises setting forth and illustrating the history and the doctrines of religion, would they omit to make express statement of the Trinity? Would they leave any room for their readers to doubt their belief in it? The answer is obvious. They would state it over and over again. They consider it a fundamental doctrine, and it would be their duty to do so. How, then, can we account for the omission of such express statement by the writers of the Sacred Scriptures? Only in one way. They were unacquainted with the doctrine of a Trinity, or if they knew it, they did not consider it a true doctrine of religion.

The holy prophets and apostles sowed "good seed,"—they gave sound religious teaching. Whence, then, came the "tares,"—the strange and mistaken doctrines which have sprung up and spread so extensively in the field of Christianity? We are now considering the doctrine of the Godhead. Inconsiderate polemics sometimes taunt Unitarians for being in the small minority, and point triumphantly to the vast multitude of Trinitarian believers,—the reputedly orthodox of Christendom. The inquiry, then, is

fitting, Whence came a Trinity of persons in the Deity? How came it to attain its present position in the world? And to give an answer to these questions will be the aim of the following essay.

The doctrine of the Trinity, we say, sprung, not from the statements of the oracles of God, but from the refined speculations of human philosophy. In all such grave investigations it becomes us to remember that God is ever present with us, and to seek the aid of his good spirit, which is able to guide us into all truth.

About 360 years before the Christian era flourished Plato, the celebrated Athenian sage. That great man was superior to the popular idolatry of his country and time. He held the doctrine of a supreme First Cause, unseen, and ever active, — the fountain of all goodness, wisdom, and life. He had many and ardent disciples, men who admired their great master-mind, followed him through the academic shades of Athens while living, and carefully studied his writings when dead. He formed a school of philosophy by which his name was perpetuated from generation to generation. His disciples were proud of their master, and took their name from him. They were called Platonists. It is not requisite here to speak of their doctrines generally; in this discussion we are concerned with only one of those doctrines. The Divinity of the Platonists was a Triad, or Trinity of hypostases or persons. Their first was *To Agathon*, — the Supreme Good; their second was called *Logos* or *Nous*, — Mind or Intellect; their third was called *Psyche*, — Soul. To give an idea of this Platonic doctrine of a Trinity in the Divine nature, we shall quote from Cudworth's "Intellectual System." The second hypostasis or person of the Platonic Trinity was said to have been generated from the first. "But that the second hypostasis

or person [in the Platonic Trinity], viz. Mind or Intellect, though said to have been generated, or to have proceeded by way of emanation, from the first, called *To Agathon*, the Good, was, notwithstanding, unquestionably acknowledged to have been eternal, or without beginning, might be proved," says Dr. Cudworth, "by many express testimonies of the most genuine Platonists." And then the learned author of the "Intellectual System" cites Plotinus, a Platonic writer, to this effect. "'Let all temporal generation here be quite banished from our thoughts, whilst we treat of things eternal, or such as always are; we attributing generation to them only in respect of causality and order, but not of time.' And though Plotinus," continues Cudworth, "there speaks particularly of the second hypostasis, or *Nous*, yet does he afterwards extend the same also to the third hypostasis of that Trinity, called *Psyche* or the mundane Soul." *

Again, we read, "that, though the genuine Platonists or Pythagoreans supposed none of their three archical hypostases to be indeed *creatures*, but all of them *eternal*, *necessarily existent*, and *universal* or *infinite*, and consequently creators of the whole world; yet did they nevertheless assert an essential dependence of the second hypostasis upon the *first*, as also the third both upon the *first* and *second*, together with a gradual subordination in them." †

Farther, we are informed, "that though these philosophers sometimes called their three divine hypostases not only *Treis Physeis*, three natures, and three principles, and three causes, and three opificers; but also three Gods; and a first, and second, and third God; yet did they often, for

* Cudworth's Intellectual System of the Universe, p. 573.
† Ibid. p. 580.

all that, suppose all these to be one *Theion*, one Divinity. . . . . Thus, when God is often spoken of in Plato singularly, the word is not always to be understood of the first hypostasis only, or *To Agathon*, but many times plainly of the *proton*, and *deuteron*, and *triton*, the first, and second, and third, all together, or that whole Divinity which consisteth or is made up of these three hypostases." * "The Platonists, therefore," continues Dr. Cudworth in another place, "first of all suppose such a close and near conjunction betwixt the three hypostases of their Trinity as is nowhere else to be found in the whole world." To show this, he cites a passage from Plotinus, the Platonic philosopher already named. "The Platonists further declare," says this very learned author, "that these hypostases of their Trinity are absolutely indivisible, and inseparable, as is the splendor indivisibly conjoined with the light or sun: *which similitude Athanasius often makes use of to the same purpose.* These Platonists seem likewise to attribute to their three divine hypostases just such a circumcession or mutual in-being as Christians do. For as their second and third hypostases must needs be in the first, they being therein virtually contained; so must the first likewise be in the second and third, they being, as it were, but two other editions thereof, or itself gradually displayed and expanded. But to speak particularly, the first must needs be in the second, the *Agathon* in the *Nous*, and so both of them really *one* and the *same God.*" †

The citations just made convey a tolerably distinct impression of the Platonic doctrine of the Deity. The conception of the Platonic philosophers was that of a Trinity of hypostases, or persons, subsisting in the Supreme Being,

* Ibid. p. 588. † Ibid. p. 590.

— the second being *generated* from the first, and the third being essentially *dependent* on both the *first* and *second*, while yet it is asserted that all three are *coessential*, *coeternal*, and one *Divinity*.

Two facts are now before us, which should be carefully borne in mind: —

1st. The doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead *is not* plainly expressed in the Sacred Scriptures.

2d. Such a doctrine *is* plainly taught in the writings of the Platonic philosophers.

It will be readily perceived that there is a marked difference between the manner in which the subject of God's existence is spoken of by our Lord and his Apostles, and that in which it is spoken of by the disciples of the Athenian philosopher.

We ask attention, now, to another fact of great importance. There is to be found no recognition of the present doctrine of the Trinity in the works of any of the Christian writers of the first three centuries. Says a highly reputable living writer, — "I am prepared to state, without fear of contradiction, that the doctrine of the *equality* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be found in any genuine Christian work of the first *three* centuries, and that there cannot be found, with reference to the Divine nature, in any genuine Christian work of the first *two* centuries, any statement of doctrine equivalent or approaching to, or consistent with, the modern doctrine of the Trinity." *

With a few very brief citations from the works of those early Christian writers, in illustration of their opinions, we may leave the reader to form his own judgment as to

* Peabody's Lectures on Christian Doctrine, p. 41.

whether they could have been believers in the coequality of the alleged persons of the Godhead.

Clement of Rome, *A. D.* 96, writes, — "The Apostles preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore, was *sent out* by God, and the Apostles by Christ. Both these events were ordered by the *will* of *God*." *

Justin Martyr, *A. D.* 140. "I will endeavor to show that he who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and who is called God in Scripture, is different from *the God who made all things*, *numerically different*, but the *same* in *will*. For I say that he never made any thing but what *that God who made all things*, and above whom there is no God, *willed* that he should do and say." †

Clement of Alexandria, *A. D.* 194. "There is *One Unbegotten Almighty Father*, and one first begotten, by whom all things were, and without whom nothing was made. For one is truly God who made the *arche* (beginning) of all things, meaning his first begotten Son." ‡

Tertullian, *A. D.* 200. This writer is the author of a work against Praxeas, who advocated the strictness of the Divine Unity, with much success, in Africa, at the close of the second century. Therein he writes, — "I do not altogether say there are gods and lords, but I follow the Apostle, so that, if the Father and the Son are named together, I call the Father God, and Jesus Christ *Lord*; though I can call Christ God when speaking of himself alone." § And he explains this expression by the illustration of a ray coming from the sun, which may with propriety, he says, be called the sun.

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* Clement's Ep., sect. 42.
† Dial. cum Tryph., p. 252.
‡ Strom., Lib. VI. p. 644.
§ Adv. Prax., sect. 13.

Origen, A. D. 230. Referring to those who were jealous for the Divine Unity, this writer says, — "We may by this means solve the doubts which terrify many men, who pretend to great piety, and who are afraid of making two gods. . . . . For we must tell them that he who is *God of himself* is THE *God*, even as our Saviour affirms in his prayer to his Father, 'that they may know *Thee*, THE *only true God*'; but that whosoever becomes divine by partaking of his divinity cannot be styled THE God, but *a* god, among whom especially is *the first-born of every creature*." Also he says, — "The Saviour and the Holy Spirit *are more excelled by the Father* than he (Christ) and the Holy Spirit excel other things, etc., and he (Christ), though excelling such and such great things (viz. thrones, principalities, etc.) in essence, and office, and power, and Godhead, *is by no means to be compared to the Father*." *

Novatian, A. D. 251. "The rule of truth teaches us to believe, after the FATHER, in the *Son* of *God*, the Lord Jesus Christ; *our* God, yet the *Son* of GOD, of that GOD who is ONE and ALONE, the Maker of all things." †

Eusebius of Cæsarea, A. D. 315. "The only begotten *Son* of God, and first-born of every creature, teaches us to call his FATHER the ONLY TRUE GOD, and commands us to worship HIM (the Father) *only*." ‡

From the quotations just given, our readers can judge whether those ancient fathers of the Church were believers in a Trinity of *coequal* persons in the Godhead. To us it seems evident they were not. This, then, is another particular which must be borne in mind, in connection with the other two already named.

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* Comment., Vol. II. pp. 47, 218. † Cap. IX. p. 26.

‡ Præparatio, Lib. VII. cap. 15.

Now let us turn attention to yet another circumstance in history. "The arms of the Macedonians diffused over Asia and Egypt the language and learning of Greece; and the theological system of Plato was taught with less reserve, and, perhaps, with some improvements, in the celebrated school of Alexandria. A numerous colony of Jews had been invited, by favor of the Ptolemies, to settle in their new capital. While the bulk of the nation practised the legal ceremonies, and pursued the lucrative occupations of commerce, a few Hebrews of a more liberal spirit devoted their lives to religious and philosophical contemplation. They cultivated with diligence, and embraced with ardor, the theological system of the Athenian sage."* Here, then, we have a school of Platonic philosophy established at Alexandria, in Egypt. Numbers of Jews in that place, who devoted their lives to philosophical studies, admired the theological system of Plato, and effected a union between it and the theology of Moses. This was the first inroad on the pure monotheism of the Bible. As Christianity was propagated, it found its way likewise to that noted seat of commerce and learning, Alexandria. Here the simple doctrines of the Gospel came in contact with minds imbued with the metaphysical subtilties of the Platonic philosophy. Those minds, vain of their subtile wisdom, and proud of their fashionable doctrines, could not brook the idea of accepting, in its simplicity, the system of a Teacher who had been hunted down in his native country, and crucified like a common slave. As this had been "to the Jews a stumbling-block," so it was "to the Greeks foolishness." The plain doctrines of Christianity were *too plain* for men

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. III. pp. 313, 314.

accustomed to such refined speculations. They were led, therefore, to seek in the Christian system ideas corresponding to those to which they had been accustomed in their popular and fashionable philosophy. In such a state of mind, they would readily and eagerly seize on any apparent approximation to their favorite notions, and in the employment of the term *Logos* by the Apostle John, in the introduction to his Gospel, they discovered a point which they thought justified them in blending the doctrines of Platonism with those of Christianity. *Logos* is a Greek term signifying sometimes "word," "doctrine," "discourse," etc., and sometimes the "reason," or rational faculty in man. This was one of the terms used by the Platonists to denote the second hypostasis or person in their Divinity. They therefore interpreted the Apostle John in this sense. They made the *Logos*, or "Word," a second hypostasis or person in the Deity, and thus laid the foundation of the present Church doctrine of the Trinity. We do not say they completed this doctrine, for it was a work of time to bring it to its present state, as we shall presently show. But we say that in this way the Platonic philosophers who embraced the Christian religion laid the basis of the present popular doctrine of a Trinity of *coequal* persons in the Godhead.

Gibbon, in his peculiar style, says, that "the Athenian sage had marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising discoveries of the Christian revelation." But this sneer of the historian falls lightly on us, for we deny that the Trinity forms any part of the Christian revelation; and we sorely regret that the popular faith of the Christian Church should seem to give ground for such a sneer. Gibbon tells us, also, that "the same subtile and profound questions concerning the nature, the generation, the distinction,

and the equality of the three Divine persons of the mysterious Triad or Trinity were agitated in the *philosophical* and in the *Christian* schools of Alexandria." * No less a champion of the Trinity than Bishop Horsley himself acknowledges that the Platonic converts to Christianity "applied the principles of their old philosophy to the explication and confirmation of the articles of their faith. They defended it by arguments drawn from Platonic principles, and *even propounded it in Platonic language.*" † And St. Augustine, in his Confessions, has stated that he was in darkness about the matter, until he found the doctrine concerning the *Logos*, or "Word," in a Latin translation of some Platonic writings. ‡ Thus plainly admitting that it was the Platonic philosophy which moulded this portion of his Christian faith.

But while the doctrine of the simple unity of God was invaded and obscured in one part of the world by the influence of Gentile philosophy, it was steadily maintained in its purity in another. The Jews of Palestine were not familiarized with the Platonic writings, as the Jews and people of Egypt were. They knew nothing of a threefold nature in God. Many of them received Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ of God. Such was the declaration and doctrine of Peter, one of the earliest of those Jewish converts to the Gospel. But none of this class ever did accept the doctrine of the supreme Deity of the Son. On this account they came to be set down afterwards among the heretics. Through the influences already referred to,

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* Decline and Fall, Vol. III. p. 319.

† Charge IV. § 2, apud Norton on the Trinity.

‡ Opp. I. p. 128. See also Translation of Augustine's Confessions, Boston, 1843, Book VII.

however, the doctrine of the Deity of the *Logos*, or "Word," came to be introduced among Christian believers generally, and propagated in the Church. At its introduction, its advocates did not aim to establish an absolute equality, for some of the fathers who advocate the doctrine plainly intimate elsewhere in their writings the subordination of the Son to the Father. How the attempt to introduce it was met by the great body of Christians, may be learned from a passage in the writings of Tertullian: — "The simple, the ignorant and the unlearned, who are always the greater part of the body of Christians, since the rule of faith [the Apostles' Creed, probably] transfers the worship of many gods to the one true God, not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained but with the economy [distribution of persons], dread this economy; imagining that this number and disposition of a Trinity is the division of the Unity. They, therefore, will have it that we are worshippers of two, and even of three Gods, but that they are the worshippers of one God only. 'We,' say they, 'hold the monarchy' [absolute unity]. Even the Latins have learned to bawl out for the monarchy, and the Greeks themselves will not understand the economy." *

The repugnance of the generality of Christians to this new and strange doctrine may be farther learned from Origen, who writes that, when it is necessary, the Gospel must be taught in a corporeal or literal way, "saying to the carnal, that we know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But when persons are found confirmed in the spirit, and in love with heavenly wisdom [i. e. persons more refined, and capable of understanding his spiritual

* Adv. Praxeam, Cap. III., ap. Priestley's History of Opinions, Lardner's Credibility, and other writers.

philosophy], we must impart to them the *Logos*," * that is, the mysterious doctrine of his Divinity.

But the new opinion (involving a distribution of the Supreme Divinity, similar to that of the Platonists) gradually advanced in the Christian world. Its advocates were earnest in their recommendation of it. It is reasonable to suppose that Justin Martyr may be taken as the representative of a class. That writer was a Platonic philosopher as well as a Christian, and he writes to another Platonic philosopher who was not a Christian, saying that Christ corresponds to the second person of the Trinity, as Plato their master had taught them. The doctrine carries some subtilties and nice distinctions along with it, which circumstance would recommend it to a certain class of minds; while, at the same time, it has an air of mystery and marvel about it which would recommend it to another class, — to a class of ruder and less cultivated cast, and naturally fond of the marvellous. It gradually advanced, however, obscuring the simplicity of the Gospel; and early in the fourth century, the indiscreet zeal of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, brought the matter to open and public controversy. Alexandria, the great seat of the Platonic philosophy, was the birthplace of the alleged Christian doctrine of a Trinity. Here it was generated, and here it flourished, until it gathered strength and boldness from the number of its adherents. Alexander, the bishop, in an assembly of his clergy, alleged and asserted that the Son was consubstantial (*homoousian*) with the Father. Here he was promptly met by Arius, one of his presbyters, who assailed the doctrine of his bishop, and maintained the proper subordination of the Son. This was the commencement of a

* Comment. II. p. 9. History of Opinions, Book III. Chap. 13.

controversy, the most important on the page of history,— a controversy which shook the Church and the world. The grand question at issue was the doctrine of the Godhead. Arius (who was the leader of what may be called the Unitarian party of the time) maintaining the supremacy of the Father, and the absolute unity of the Supreme Being. Now *Arius was no Platonist.* For saying this we have the authority of Dr. Cudworth. But Arius was standing in opposition to his bishop. Powerful influences were, therefore, against him. Alexander assembled a council of his clergy, at which he himself presided; and he procured a sentence of excommunication against his opponent. The result was, Arius and his adherents were deposed from their offices in the Church. This was the first stage of the great Arian controversy.

This step of the bishop quickened the zeal of the Arians. They were not to be thus speedily extinguished. The discussion was carried on with great vigor, and no little acrimony, on both sides. So violent did the dispute become, that appeal was made to the Emperor Constantine. The Emperor was unwilling to interfere. He addressed both parties in an epistle recommending peace and unity. But the adherents of the bishop urged his interference, and he yielded to their request. As the most proper and effectual way of deciding the controversy, he resolved to call a general council of the Church, "and *that*," says Waddington, "was, perhaps, the most critical moment in ecclesiastical history, in which Constantine determined to convoke the Council of Nice."

Hear the same historian's account of that assembly:— "In the year 325, A. D., about three hundred and eighteen bishops assembled at Nice (Nicœa), in Bithynia, for the purpose of composing the Arian controversy. 'Let us

consider,' says Dr. Jortin, 'by what various motives these various men might be influenced; by reverence to the Emperor, or to his counsellors and favorites, his slaves and eunuchs; by fear of offending some great prelate, who had it in his power to insult, vex, and plague all the bishops within and without his jurisdiction, by the dread of passing for heretics, and of being calumniated, reviled, hated, anathematized, excommunicated, imprisoned, banished, fined, beggared, starved, if they refused to submit; by compliance with some active, leading, and imperious spirits; by a deference to the majority; by a love of dictating and domineering, of applause and respect; by vanity and ambition; by a total ignorance of the question in debate, or a total indifference about it; by private friendship, by enmity and resentment, by old prejudices, by hopes of gain, by an indolent disposition, by good nature, by the fatigue of attending, and a desire to be at home, by the love of peace and quiet, and a hatred of contention,' etc. These considerations will enable us to form an opinion of the value of any decision such an assemblage should arrive at. The bishops began," continues Waddington, "by much personal dissension, and presented to the Emperor a variety of written accusations against each other. The Emperor burnt all their libels, and exhorted them to peace and unity. They then proceeded to examine the momentous question proposed to them." And after much acrimony and unintelligible argument, the decision went against the Arian opinions, and by this council was "established, respecting the *first two persons* of the Trinity, the doctrine which the Church still professes in the Nicene Creed." * These considerations will farther enable us to judge of the value to

* Waddington's Church History, pp. 91, 92, 93.

be attached to the Nicene Creed. And to crown the whole, Arius was banished, his writings committed to the flames, and sentence of death pronounced against any person in whose possession copies of those writings should hereafter be found.

But it is difficult to crush opinion. A steady and persevering course of heartless persecution may and will do it; but great as was the disaster of the decision of the Council of Nice, the Arians were far from being subdued. Strong in the strength of what they conceived to be the truth, they continued to profess and promulgate their opinions, not only throughout Asia, but in Alexandria itself. And such was the effect of their efforts, that Constantine recalled Arius from banishment, and subsequently received baptism from an Arian bishop. In the mean time, however, Alexander died, and he was succeeded in the see of Alexandria by the celebrated Athanasius. This man likewise succeeded to all his predecessor's enmity against Arius and his opinions. He protested against the recall of that distinguished exile; but in vain. For now the imperial favor was setting toward the Arian party. Athanasius himself shortly afterwards shared the fate he was so anxious to perpetuate on his opponent. At a council held at Tyre, A. D. 335, he was condemned and banished. Soon after the death of Constantine, he was restored. Constantine was succeeded in the throne by his son Constantius, a very zealous Arian. Athanasius was an ardent and constant assertor of his opinions. He was an admirer of the Platonic doctrine of a Trinity, and in his discussions with the Arians, he used to tell them to go to school to the Platonists.* In A. D. 341, he was again banished by the Coun-

* Cudworth, p. 623.

cil of Antioch. Again he was restored, and a third time he was banished. This exile lasted six years, after which he was, for a third time, restored. It will be observed here, that both parties partook fully of the persecuting spirit of the age. The Athanasians, when they had the power, persecuted the Arians; and the Arians, in their turn, persecuted the Athanasians. At this period, during the reigns of Constantius and Valens, Arianism was in the ascendant for nearly half a century. But during the reign of Theodosius, it was subdued and crushed. The means employed for this purpose were of the most cruel and unjustifiable character.

Let us now briefly notice the progressive formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, until it arrived at its present form. In doing so, we shall take the three creeds of the Church of England Prayer-book as historical documents, and by means of these point out the gradual progress of the doctrine. Intervals of centuries elapsed between the times of the composition of these creeds respectively, and each creed as it stands shows the change of opinion which had taken place in the mean time. By looking at these three creeds, we can perceive how the advance was gradually made from the simple and consistent teachings of the Scriptures to the complex and contradictory doctrines of the present popular theology.

The first creed we shall cite is that commonly called the Apostles' Creed. It is a Unitarian creed, and was the only one known to the Church during the first three hundred years. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;

the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. — I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

This, we say, is a Unitarian creed, and since it was the only creed recognized and used by the Christians of the first ages, it shows us clearly that the faith of the primitive Church was Unitarian. The Church at the present day would not be satisfied with such a creed. And the reason is obvious. Their faith is widely different from that of the early Christians.

We shall next quote the Nicene Creed. It was drawn up, as we have seen, at the Council of Nice in the fourth century. An important modification had by this time taken place in the Christian faith and mode of expression, through the influence of the Platonic philosophy. In this creed we perceive a great departure from the simple Unitarianism of the primitive ages, yet it by no means unfolds the perfect doctrine of a Trinity. This was to be the work of subsequent times. It has been not inappropriately styled the Semitrinitarian creed. It is in truth only half Trinitarian in its doctrines and character. Here it is: — "I believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made: who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the

Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost [the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son), who with the Father and the Son together is to be worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets]. And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen." *

This creed, we say, is only half Trinitarian in its doctrine and character. The Son is declared consubstantial with the Father. Deity is ascribed to him, but not in the same terms which are employed in the subsequent creed. Deity is ascribed to the Son, but it seems to be a *derived* deity rather than a deity absolute, independent, and coequal. He is styled "God *of* God." But no deity whatever was ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed as originally framed. This doctrine was the production of another council held more than half a century afterwards.†

* The clause here inclosed with the outer brackets was not in the creed as it came from the Council of Nice, but was added more than half a century afterwards by the Council of Constantinople. This council sat A. D. 381, and it was here, and by this clause, that the doctrine of the Trinity received what the learned Trinitarian historian Mosheim has called its "finishing touch." The clause "and the Son" within the inner brackets was subsequently added in Spain, and generally adopted in the ninth century.

† The writer of an article on the Incarnation in the Methodist Quarterly Review for January, 1851, affords unexpected support to some

The third and last creed we have to cite is that which is commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius. Its origin is involved in obscurity. It is generally admitted that it is not the production of the man whose name it bears. It is very commonly attributed to Vigilius Tapsensis, who

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of our positions. After remarking that the time has come when this and the cognate questions should be reëxamined, he adds, — "Nor do we fear the ultimate result of this investigation, whatever may be its more immediate consequences. Essential truth can lose nothing by the discussion. A clearer apprehension and a more precise statement of cardinal principles may possibly be reached. And even if, in reaching them, we should be compelled to surrender points we have been accustomed to regard as fundamental and essential, Christianity loses nothing, and we are infinite gainers." In regard to the Nicene Creed, he says, — "The formula of this Creed, 'We believe in God,' most clearly has exclusive reference to the Father, independent of, and placed above, both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more clear than that the Nicene Fathers regarded *autotheion* [divine *in himself*, not by derivation] and *agennesia* [not generated, unproduced] as pertaining exclusively to the Father; but it is equally evident that they regarded this as in no way conflicting with the Divinity of the Son." Of course not, we say, because the divinity of the Son which they held was, in some sense, a derived divinity, rather than inherent and independent. This is a point which ought always to be distinguished and kept in mind. How great soever may have been the departure, in the Nicene age, from the strict Unity of the primitive times, and whatever may have been the character of the Trinity then arrived at, it seems clear that they had not advanced to the doctrine of a Trinity of persons absolutely coequal, such as was developed in subsequent times, which is now the prevalent faith of Christendom. "The Son," writes the Reviewer, "is sometimes called by them *deuteros Theos* [second God]. The unity they were strenuous to maintain seems to have been merely of counsel, will, and work." In this article we are also reminded of a fact in history, the statement of which will not be wholly out of place here, namely, that it was at the Council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century (453), that the doctrine of the "two natures" in Christ was authoritatively settled and pronounced.

lived at the close of the fifth century. It was published to the world with the name of Athanasius surreptitiously attached, to secure it credit and currency. In it we perceive the doctrine of the Trinity advanced to what may be regarded as its perfect stage. It contains, probably, the most hopeless catalogue of contradictions that ever the ingenuity of man devised. We shall cite that portion of it only which refers exclusively to the doctrine of the Trinity.

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith; which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as

we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after the other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal. So that in all things as is aforesaid, the Unity in the Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity."

In this creed we have evidence of farther important modifications of the opinion on the subject of the Godhead, between the period of the Council of Nice and the time of its promulgation, — involving an interval of probably two centuries. But though this creed, asserting the absolute coeternity and coequality of the three persons of the Trinity, was promulgated perhaps in the fifth or sixth century, it did not meet with a general reception among Christians until probably the ninth or tenth century." * It was never established, however, by any general council of the Church. We are told by the learned Cudworth, that the doctrine of a "Trinity of persons, numerically the same, or having one and the same existent essence," (which is the present popular form of the doctrine,) was not owned by any public authority in the Christian Church until it was established

* Waddington, p. 220.

by the Lateran Council.* The council referred to here was the fourth Lateran Council, which sat A. D. 1215. Thus it appears that it was as late as the thirteenth century that the present popular doctrine of the Trinity was publicly sealed, and authoritatively consummated. And it is worthy of remark, that it was the same council which established the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was in the night of those ages, then, which Protestants, at least, have been accustomed to style Dark Ages, that those twin dogmas received authoritative seal and sanction from the same ecclesiastical assembly.

"Good seed,"—simple and sound doctrine,—was sown by the prophets of old, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles; but the "tares" of subtle and false doctrine gradually sprung up in the Church. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," was the announcement of the divinely appointed Hebrew leader; but the subtle speculations of men in time announced that God was *three* as well as one. The Lord Jesus Christ himself has plainly said, the Father is "*the only true God*," and the Apostle Paul, after him, has declared, "To us there is but *one God, the Father*"; but, notwithstanding the precision of these statements, men in their pride of opinion have constructed authoritative creeds, in which *two other persons* are set forth as sharing the supreme Godhead, as well as the Father. We hold to the positive statements of Moses, the Lord Jesus, and his Apostles, concerning the fundamental point of all religion, the Godhead; but though we do so, we are stigmatized as negative religionists; and this, because we will not also accept the constructed statements of the popular creeds. Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apos-

* Intell. Syst., p. 604.

tles, we say, sowed good seed. Whence, then, came the tares? From what we have just set forth, we think the reader will be enabled to discern whence they came. Let us here recall the principal points exhibited. The sacred writings of the Bible are without any statement of a trinity of persons in the Godhead. The writings of the Platonic philosophy do plainly teach such a doctrine. The doctrine of the *coequality* of the alleged persons cannot be found in the genuine work of any Christian writer of the first three centuries. Alexandria, in Egypt, was the noted seat of the Platonic philosophy; and as the simple doctrines of the Gospel advanced to that place, they were corrupted by the subtilties of the Platonic system. Here sprung up that great controversy concerning the unity of God, and the supremacy of the Father, which shook the Church and the world in the fourth century, in which, after alternating defeat and victory, the power of the temporal prince subdued the Unitarians. And lastly, we marked the important modifications of religious opinion which the world has undergone from the primitive ages until now, as evidenced by the three creeds. By looking at the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, we have seen how, through restless speculation, and metaphysical subtilties, the world has been led by degrees from the simple Unitarian Christianity of the early ages to the present complicated system of prevalent Trinitarian theology.

And now some may be willing to inquire how Unitarianism was so completely subdued, that we do not find it raising its head with any proper success after the fourth century; and how it happens that even now, three centuries after the Reformation, it is professed by but a small minority of the Christian world. A remark or two may satisfy this inquiry. Unitarianism, we say, was the doc-

trine of the first ages, and its wide-spread prevalence in the fourth century stands a prominent fact on the page of history. Time has been when the struggle was, "The world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against the world," — when the opponents of the Arians were heard to cry, "They have the people, but we have the faith," — when Athanasius himself had to write a treatise to prove that numbers were not to be regarded as a test of truth.* But the Arians were crushed; not, however, by fair persuasion and argument. Shortly after the death of Valens (an Arian Emperor), Theodosius ascended the throne. This prince was a Trinitarian. He was likewise a cruel

* Chillingworth, in reply to his opponent's charge against Protestantism of want of universality, denies the "absolute universality and diffusion" of Catholicism, and says, that, though the Catholics should now be larger than any other sect of Christians, it is "most certain the time has been when they have not been so; — when the whole world wondered that it was become Arian, (Jerome,) — when Athanasius opposed the world, and the world Athanasius, — when the Catholic Liberius, having the contemptible paucity of his adherents objected to him as a note of error, answered for himself, 'There was a time when there were but three opposed the decree of the king, and yet those three were in the right, and the rest in the wrong,' — when the professors of error surpassed the number of the professors of truth in proportion as the sands of the sea do the stars of heaven, (as St. Austin acknowledges,) — when Vincentius confesses that 'the poison of the Arians had contaminated, not now some certain portion, but almost the whole world,' — when the author of Nazienzen's life testifies that the heresy of Arius had possessed, in a manner, the whole extent of the world, — when Nazienzen found cause to cry out, 'Where are they who reproach us with our poverty, who define the Church by the multitude, and despise the little flock? They have the people, but we the faith,' — and when Athanasius was so overborne with shoals and floods of Arians, that he was enforced to write a treatise on purpose against those who judge of the truth only by plurality of adherents." — *Religion of Protestants, Ans. to* Chap. VI. Sect. 42.

persecutor, and particularly remarkable for the inflexible perseverance with which he carried out his persecuting plans. He "considered," says Gibbon, "every heretic [i. e. every one who differed from himself] as a rebel against heaven and earth. . . . . In the space of fifteen years he promulgated at least fifteen severe edicts, ... more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; and to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted, that, if any laws or rescripts should be alleged in their favor, the judges should consider them as illegal productions either of fraud or forgery."* And Waddington says, "As he persevered inflexibly, ... his severities were attended by general and lasting success, and the doctrine of Arius, if not perfectly extirpated, withered from that moment rapidly and irrecoverably."† The page of history, then, leaves us at no loss respecting the foul and cruel means by which this form of Unitarianism was crushed at the close of the fourth century. We all know what followed. Ages of general ignorance and darkness came upon the world, and the human mind, when thoughtfully exercised at all, became involved in scholastic disputations which were certainly not favorable to the simplification of a religious creed. Under such circumstances, Christianity, instead of being purified, had corruption after corruption heaped upon it, until the reality of the religion seemed almost lost; and, we may say, was almost lost, amid the multitude of factitious appendages. And even when the day of reformation did come, the cruel spirit of the Theodosian edicts was still alive. Servetus, at Geneva, was burned at a stake raised by the hands of the Reform-

* Decline and Fall, Vol. V. p. 31.

† History of the Church, p. 99.

ers, because he maintained, from Scripture, the simple unity of God. The learned and accomplished Socini were obliged to flee their native country for the same cause, and take refuge in a foreign land. Thus it was that Unitarianism was treated, even in a boasted age of advancing light and freedom. And it may seem strange to some when we add, that it was not until about thirty-five years ago that the penal statutes against the profession of Unitarian opinions were expunged from the statute-book of Britain. May we not see, in such circumstances, ample reason why Unitarianism has not spread more widely? But this is not all. Even where open violence is not arrayed against it, or legal enactments hanging over it, popular opinion is brought to bear constantly and most unfairly against it. It is unjustly and ungenerously dealt with from the pulpit, from the platform, by the common religious press, and in the private circle. People are cautioned against it, and warned against it, in public and in private, as a seductive and awful heresy, until weak minds become alarmed, and are frightened from any approach to investigation. No yoke of priestcraft was ever more disastrous to healthy freedom of thought than this yoke of popular opinion. Warnings are uttered against Unitarianism as an awful heresy, though we can state its every tenet in the fairly quoted language of that Sacred Book which all Protestants recognize as the highest and only proper rule of faith, and this is more than can be done for the doctrines commonly called orthodox. Thus has it become very generally misunderstood, and very frequently misrepresented; and the tendency of the more prevalent faith is to close the avenues of the popular mind against every reasonable explanation and argument, and in this way perpetuate the misapprehensions and misrepresentations. Again we ask, Do we not see, in such circum-

stances, ample reason why Unitarian opinions have not spread more widely? Simple Unitarianism is the latent faith of multitudes, who almost fear to recognize it, though it exists in their minds. And many, again, who do recognize it, are deterred from acting upon it through the subtile influence of that public opinion to which so large a class of both young and old are content to live in bondage. They permit their souls to be hemmed in by a spider's web, which one manly word would break, if they only had the courage and candor to utter it. Many others, again, who, under different circumstances, might be inquisitive in the matter, are not anxious to inquire when the result might involve them in a belief which is not very popular. The higher work of the world, and the sacred cause of Truth, must, of course, be sustained and promoted by minds of a nobler order. If we feel our faith to be *true*, we should never shrink from its avowal, whether it be popular or unpopular. And, popular or unpopular, we believe that Unitarianism is true, and therefore we profess and maintain it. We believe that we can prove it true from reason and from Scripture. And we can point to a period in history when the faith of the world hung trembling in the balance, — Unitarianism and Trinitarianism poised against each other, and depending on the accident of the opinion and temper of a temporal prince to give either side the preponderance. The effects of the persevering cruelty of Theodosius are everywhere felt in the world, at the present time, in the prevalence of Trinitarianism. If any Arian Emperor had been guilty of such inflexible and incessant persecution against those who differed from him in opinion, the result, we think, would have been otherwise; a different form of faith, we think, would at this day have been prevalent in the Christian world.

1st Series. No. 277.

THE

TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

ADDRESSES AT THE ANNIVERSARY,

MAY 27, 1851.

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TWENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY.

The Twenty-sixth Anniversary of the American Unitarian Association was celebrated May 27th, 1851.

The meeting for business was held in the Bedford Street chapel, at 9 o'clock, A. M., the President in the chair.

Prayer was offered by Rev. Charles H. Brigham, of Taunton. The record of the last annual meeting was read. The Secretary read the Report of the Executive Committee, which was accepted, and ordered to be printed. The Treasurer's Report was read and accepted, and referred to Messrs. Thomas Tarbell and Nathaniel A. Barrett, as auditors.

The Association then proceeded to the choice of officers. Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, D. D., Rev. Alonzo Hill, and Rev. James W. Thompson, D. D., declining a reëlection, a vote of thanks was passed, acknowledging their faithfulness and ability in the service of the Association.

The following gentlemen were chosen officers for the ensuing year.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. Samuel K. Lothrop, of Boston.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Stephen Fairbanks, of Boston.
Rev. Edward B. Hall, D. D., of Providence, R. I.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Isaiah Bangs, Esq., of Cambridge,
Hon. Albert Fearing, of Boston,
Rev. Charles Brooks, of Boston,
Rev. Henry A. Miles, D. D., of Lowell,
Rev. George W. Briggs, of Plymouth,
} *Directors.*

Henry P. Fairbanks, of Charlestown, *Treasurer.*
Rev. Calvin Lincoln, of Boston, *Secretary.*

The usual business having been transacted, the Association adjourned to meet at the Federal Street meeting-house, at 7½ o'clock.

At a subsequent meeting of the Executive Committee, Rev. Charles Briggs was appointed to perform the duties of Assistant Secretary.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

Statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association, for the Year ending May 27th, 1851.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 28th, 1850, as per account then rendered,		$1,462 64
From Auxiliary Associations and Annual Subscriptions,	$1,142 75	
" Societies, by Contributions and Subscriptions,	4,338 56	
" Societies and Individuals, for Churches needing Aid,	350 00	
" Societies and Individuals for Theological Education,	261 25	
" Societies and Individuals for the Circulation of Channing's Works and other Books (including the amount received for sales),	1,037 76	
" Donations,	351 00	
" Life Members,	300 00	
" Sales of Tracts,	52 89	
" Interest of Permanent Fund,	777 68	
" General Secretary, for Preaching,	65 00	
		8,676 89
		$10,139 53

EXPENDITURES.

For Printing and Binding Tracts,	1,193 17	
" Channing's Works and other Books for Sale and Distribution,	1,008 00	
" Salary of General Secretary, (11 months,)	1,375 00	
" " " Assistant "	500 00	
" Grant to Assistant Secretary, for extra services,	50 00	
" Travelling Expenses,	109 54	
" Rent of Office, &c.,	350 00	
" For Incidental Expenses,	260 83	
		4,846 54

Amount brought forward,		$4,846 54
For Missionary Purposes, viz. : —		
To Rev. G. W. Weeks,	25 00	
" " M. De Lange,	292 00	
" " J. W. Thompson, D. D.,	10 00	
" " Ephraim Nute,	70 00	
" " Adams Ayer,	10 00	
" " L. J. Livermore,	10 00	
" Elder Donald Nicholson,	185 00	
		602 00
For Theological Education, —		
Meadville School, for Salary of Principal,	500 00	
" " " " " a Professor,	300 00	
" " " Education of Students,	1,075 00	
		1,875 00
For Aid of Unitarian Society in Rockford, Ill.,	50 00	
" " " " Cannelton, Ia.,	100 00	
" " " " Wheeling, Va.,	133 00	
" " " " Toronto, Canada,	100 00	
" " " " Windsor, Vt.,	100 00	
" " " " Brooklyn, Ct.,	150 00	
" " " " Calais, Me.,	82 50	
" " " " Topsham, Me.,	400 00	
" " " " Bridgeport, Ct.,	240 00	
" " " " Sudbury, Mass.,	50 00	
" " " " So. Natick, "	100 00	
" " " " Athol, "	50 00	
" " " " Pembroke, "	100 00	
" " " " Bedford, "	100 00	
" " Second Society in Lowell, "	200 00	
" " " " Dennis, "	50 00	
" " " " Milton, "	75 00	
" " Broadway Society, So. Boston, "	200 00	
" " Indiana St. Society, Boston, "	150 00	
		2,430 50
		9,754 04
Balance on hand,		385 49
		$10,139 53

Er. Ex.

H. P. FAIRBANKS, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 27th, 1851.

The following sums have been appropriated, but not yet drawn from the Treasury, —

For Aid of Unitarian Society at Tremont, Ill.,		$150 00
" " " "	Lockport, Ill.,	100 00
" " " "	Rockford, Ill.,	50 00
" " " "	Cannelton, Ia.,	100 00
" " " "	Nashville, Tenn.,	200 00
" " " "	Pittsburg, Penn.,	100 00
" " " "	Wheeling, Va.,	67 00
" " " "	Hartford, Ct.,	500 00
" " " "	Southington, Ct.,	100 00
" " " "	Jefferson, N. Y.,	100 00
" " " "	Calais, Me.,	67 50
" " " "	Bucksport, Me.,	250 00
		1,784 50
For Elder Donald Nicholson, balance,		15 00
		$1,799 50

Boston, June 11th, 1851. The undersigned have examined the accounts of the Treasurer, for the year ending May 27th, 1851, and find the same to be correctly cast and properly vouched.

THOMAS TARBELL,
N. A. BARRETT, } *Auditors.*

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The last anniversary of this Association completed the first twenty-five years of its existence. This fact imparted a peculiar interest to that occasion. The inquiry was naturally suggested, What has this Association accomplished, and to what extent have the designs of its founders been carried out? A review was then presented of the circumstances and wants of the denomination which justified and demanded its formation. Its earlier efforts in the defence of a simple, Scriptural faith, its subsequent operations for the diffusion of truth, the gradual enlargement of its methods of influence, its charities, and its missionary movements, were all briefly considered.

The present Executive Committee have not been studious of change in discharging their official obligations. Plans of operation already in use have been continued. Those plans were adopted with a prospective view, and their utility has shown the practical wisdom with which they were adjusted. We have not, however, confined our attention to previously established modes of influence. Entering on a new epoch in our associated existence, we have desired, if possible, to augment the power and usefulness of this institution. We have wished to render it a

means of good, corresponding at once with the numbers and wealth of those who receive our interpretation of the Gospel, and likewise with the increasing wants which appeal to us for relief and succor. We have thought it of great moment that the Association should become a bond of union, a central point of interest and confidence, both to that portion of our churches which needs encouragement and assistance, and also to that larger and more favored class on whose voluntary contributions it is mainly dependent for the means of doing good. In one word, we have desired that our organization should be made, in a just measure, the channel through which the earnest faith and benevolent sentiment of this denomination should utter its convictions of truth, and transmit to the destitute the fruits of its fraternal sympathy.

Cherishing this opinion, the Secretary, — instructed by the Executive Committee, — when addressing the several societies before which it has been his privilege to speak, has endeavored to explain the character of the work in which we are engaged, and, while stating the destitution made known by our correspondence, has described, somewhat in detail, the methods employed to supply these wants. Thus he has endeavored to show that our organization is not a mere form, an embodied creed, a charitable machine constructed to receive contributions and make appropriations; but is an expression of attachment to the divine truths which we individually profess to honor, — an expression of our willingness to coöperate "in diffusing the knowledge and promoting the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country." On these grounds, and giving prominence to these views, which we believe to be true and generous, our appeal for countenance and aid has been addressed to the

congregations of our faith. Our aim has been to awaken a deeper interest in the cause of truth; a more fervent desire for its diffusion; a true zeal in efforts to extend the kingdom of Christ on the earth, and thus to advance the highest well-being of our race. Such objects have rarely, if ever, failed to command the approval of our churches, and to secure, to some extent, more decisive evidence of interest in their accomplishment.

The Committee believe that the united action of our societies in the great work committed by its Founder to the Christian Church, would constitute a result of inappreciable value. It would become a voice of power on the side of truth and holiness. It would be heard in every department of social life. It would be an efficient means of allaying the doubts of the sceptic, and exciting to sober thought the indifferent. How rich the blessing brought by such a spirit into the community in which it has been enkindled! Let a people become devoted in their labors and liberal in their bestowments to carry forward the religious enterprises which demand our aid, and they at once will be in possession of the elements of growth and endurance. They will be disposed to consider the meaning and practical application of the truths which they are laboring to diffuse in society.

Religious activity quickens, not less than it expresses, an interest in religious instructions. Churches engaged in the same movements become more interested in each other's welfare. Partaking of the benevolence of that Gospel for whose prevalence their resources are united, they are connected by spiritual ties in one great family, the household of faith, and thus become better prepared to bear each other's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ.

Believing that they could better promote the interests of Christian truth by conforming their operations to the circumstances of the times, than by a rigid adherence to particular forms of action, the Committee of the last year endeavored to meet a manifest want, by the purchase of standard Unitarian works for subsequent sale at the lowest possible prices. Acting the present year on the same belief, the committee have been glad to give all the encouragement in their power to an enterprise, which, although it should divert funds from the treasury of the Association, they were satisfied must tend to the diffusion and establishment of correct religious opinions, especially in the Western States. We refer to the Meadville Theological School. And it is with unmingled satisfaction, and fervent gratitude to God, that we communicate to the members of the Association the result of the movement recently made in behalf of that School. This institution was founded by private liberality and Christian enterprise. In its infancy, and to the present time, it has received liberal aid from the funds of the Association.

When this seminary was first opened, with the special object of educating young men for a Western ministry, the entire plan was regarded as an experiment; and many of its warmest friends were extremely doubtful of its ultimate success. But the experiment has not failed. The standard of education has been gradually rising, and the number who seek the advantages there enjoyed has been constantly increasing.

No adequate accommodations, however, had been provided for the students, and there were no permanent funds for the maintenance of its instructors. During the last autumn, the plan was projected of giving to the institution a

permanent existence. With this view, its earliest and most liberal benefactors proposed to bestow on the School the sum of ten thousand dollars, on the condition that forty thousand dollars additional could be secured from other sources. To obtain this amount, an appeal must be made to the more wealthy congregations of our denomination in different parts of the country. Rev. Mr. Stebbins immediately wrote to this Committee, asking their counsel in regard to the course to be adopted. We considered the object to be one of such moment in extending the doctrines of a rational faith, so intimately connected with the welfare of our Western churches, so valuable in its influence on the forming character and civilization of the recently settled States of our Union, and so entirely in harmony with the great objects of our organization, that to the inquiry of Mr. Stebbins but one answer could be returned. He was advised and encouraged to visit our churches, to present to the friends of our faith the claims of the institution over which he was called to preside. The Committee of this Association afforded him all the aid in their power in accomplishing his object. And we are happy in saying that the plan has been executed, and that the sum of fifty thousand dollars has been secured to the Trustees of the Meadville Theological School.

Mr. Stebbins, in a letter referring to this subject, thus remarks: — "I wish, through you, to communicate to the board of your Association my personal obligations to them for their exertions to aid me in raising funds for the endowment of the Meadville Theological School. Indeed, they were so generous as to omit making applications for their own funds at the usual time, thus running the risk of falling entirely in arrears, that I might have the whole ground for the benefit of the School."

The Executive Committee have thought it should be a special object with them, during the year, to increase the interest of our congregations in the proceedings of the Association, with a view to more regular pecuniary contributions. The Secretary has, therefore, spent much of his time in visiting different places where he has been invited, and delivering addresses to the people on the subject; and it has been a ground of peculiar satisfaction, that he has not needed to seek opportunities to urge the claims of the Association, but has found pulpits open to him on successive Sundays. The Committee believe that much has been effected in this way, the results of which will be manifest in future years. The active concurrence of the members of our religious societies in the methods adopted by the Association is all that is needed to render our exertions widely beneficial; and the Committee regard the enlarged acquaintance of our societies with the history of the Association, and the closest sympathy with its purposes, as one of the most pleasant and important of the past year's labors.

One of the earliest efforts of the Association was the publishing of a series of tracts, suited to convey a correct idea of Christian doctrine and the Christian life.

Having issued, in the course of twenty-five years, nearly three hundred such tracts, containing discussions of all the more prominent points of faith and duty, they have not thought it incumbent on them so much to increase the number, as to furnish an adequate supply of those which have already appeared. They have, therefore, this year, omitted the monthly distribution, and have added but seven new tracts to the series. They have, however, published the Unitarian Annual Register, as, in consequence of issuing a large edition, they could furnish it to the members of the As-

sociation at half the former price, and were thus enabled at once to supply their friends with a convenient manual for daily reference, and to secure the means of disseminating, through the extracts which it contained, valuable religious matter. Should the publication of this work be continued by the Association, it may easily be made a still more efficient instrument of good. The Committee have experienced much disappointment in the refusal of many to whom they have applied to prepare manuscripts for their use. They regret that, for this reason, it has not been in their power to enlarge either the biographical or the juvenile series of tracts. They cannot refrain from the expression of a hope, that, in future years, those who with so little labor might render important aid, not only to the Association, but to the community, will be more ready to accede to their solicitations. The circulation of Unitarian works of a larger size, to which we have already adverted, as a prominent part of last year's operations, has been continued.

Many hundred copies of the Works and Memoir of Channing, and other standard volumes, have been distributed, partly through the employment of travelling agents, and partly through the efforts of active friends residing in the cities and villages of the South and West. We have the satisfaction of knowing that these books are purchased and read by individuals connected with the various denominations of which the Christian Church is composed. This method of extending the knowledge and influence of the truth deserves to be still farther pursued.

We have already remarked upon the probable effect of the subscription for the Meadville Theological School upon the amount of our annual receipts. The result corresponded to our expectations. From this cause alone, as we are justi-

fied in saying, from an examination of the Treasurer's books, the receipts will be found to fall somewhat below those of the last year. The whole amount at the disposal of the Committee, including the balance on hand at the commencement of the year, has been about ten thousand dollars, of which, for the reason just given, a less proportion than usual has been received from this city. The contributions from other places have depended, to some extent, on the opportunity which the Secretary has had of presenting the wants of the Association to our religious societies.

The Committee, as they have already suggested, are anxious to substitute, in the place of occasional and uncertain contributions, a systematic arrangement, on which more satisfactory dependence may be placed for the supply of needed funds. At different times, attempts have been made to establish auxiliaries in our several congregations. The attempt has never been more than partially successful. Any organization, however simple, by which the liberality of our societies should be turned in this direction, would accomplish the end contemplated by the Association; and the effect of such an arrangement upon the societies would be seen in their growing prosperity. The history of Christian beneficence, in all denominations, leaves us no room to doubt that a generous encouragement of religious charities promotes alike personal excellence and congregational strength.

During the year, several new societies of our faith have been formed, and others, whose permanent existence for a season was uncertain, have become established, and are now in the enjoyment of a stated ministry.

In the thriving towns of Clinton and Milford, in Massachusetts, societies have been organized under circumstances which promise a continued and healthy growth.

In the city of Wheeling, Va., our friends have united to sustain public worship; a society has been formed, and a neat and commodious meeting-house is to be erected, the coming year.

In the cities of Pittsburg, Penn., Detroit, Mich., and Toronto, C. W., public worship has been resumed under the direction of Unitarian ministers. In Toronto, a stated service is maintained, and a resident ministry has been secured. The Committee have been much interested in the accounts they have received of our brethren at Detroit. A friend, intimately acquainted with the history of this movement and the character of those who have conducted it, writes as follows: — "This society, however small, is not one of those which spring up and perish in a day. Both spiritually and materially, it is a substantial society, and will not, I am confident, die out, except by the neglect of those who may be sent here. It will live, if supplied with living preachers."

A new society has also been formed in the city of Brooklyn, N. Y., by the side of one of our most successfully conducted churches. From the ability and strength of purpose engaged in this enterprise, there is no room to apprehend an unsuccessful result.

In San Francisco, Cal., a congregation has been gathered by the efforts of the Rev. Mr. Farley, who visited California as missionary of this Association. Having recently returned to New England on a visit to his friends, we are informed that, during his absence, the work of erecting a house of worship will be prosecuted.

The history of no congregation in our body has exhibited greater evidence of growth and inward prosperity than that at St. Louis, Mo. Within the last year, finding that

the commodious house which they had built for religious service was insufficient for their wants, they have commenced the construction of a larger edifice, which will be a permanent memorial of their energy and liberality.

The attention of the Committee has been frequently called to the condition of two classes of congregations, which have appealed to them for aid in sustaining the worship of the Lord's day.

In many of our older New England towns, while the population has been stationary or declining, honest diversity of religious opinion has arisen. Hence the large number of our feeble churches.

In our Western cities and villages, where population is gathered from every part of the known world, it is frequently true that but few are thrown together who hold a common faith, and are disposed to unite in the same form of worship. There is the promise of early strength, if for a season the institutions of religion can be upheld. To twenty societies, belonging to one or the other of these two classes, we have afforded pecuniary assistance, varying in amount from fifty dollars to three hundred.

While the Committee were happy to coöperate in securing for the Meadville School the means of a permanent existence, they were not unmindful of the necessities of its immediate members. A large proportion of the young men who resort to this institution for instruction are rich only in Christian faith and in purposes of usefulness. To twenty-one students of this description, we have paid the sum of fifty dollars each. Two of them were designated by the contributors to our fund; the other nineteen were recommended by the beneficiary committee at Meadville.

Our missionary operations have been conducted on the

same general plan that has been pursued in former years. Several of our settled ministers have labored in the service of the Association a portion of the time, and received compensation according to the amount of such service. Two individuals have been employed the whole year in this field of labor. To one of these, Elder Donald Nicholson, a salary of two hundred dollars was voted. His services have been confined chiefly to the State of Illinois. He has been unwearied in his efforts to extend the influence of Christian truth, and to promote the highest welfare of those who listened to his instructions. He furnishes this summary in his last report to the Committee: — "I have preached 201 sermons. I have travelled 4,847 miles. I have received 32 members into the several churches within the bounds of my travels. I have formed 4 Sabbath schools, containing 294 scholars. I have received in cash and wheat, $41. I have lost two horses worth $150. So you see that I have left for the support of myself and my family $91. But this is more than the Master had. I have the satisfaction of knowing I have carried to many a neighborhood the word of life."

Rev. Mr. De Lange has been employed by the Association as a missionary for the term of one year. His engagement closed on the 1st of March last, when he entered the service of the society at Pittsburg, Penn. He has labored with great zeal and fidelity. He visited many of the rapidly increasing towns on the borders of our Western rivers. He found in them all, as he informed us, numbers prepared thankfully to receive his exposition of the Gospel.

Our communications with foreign lands have been less frequent than we hoped to make them. It is an occasion of regret, that the greater facilities of intercourse have not

brought us into closer connection with our brethren in England. Still we have maintained an irregular correspondence, and have received from the Secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association one or two valuable letters.

On the departure of our late Secretary for Europe, we gave him authority to appear as our delegate at the annual meeting of that body, which will be held the next month; and, more recently, we delivered similar credentials to another of our ministers, who expected to be present on the occasion.

We cannot but look on the religious state of England at this time with great interest. While it affords little direct encouragement in the diffusion of our doctrinal views, it inspires the hope of more freedom in the expression of opinion, and a wider spread of liberal sentiment, than have marked the history of the British Isles in past years. We do not desire the downfall of the Established Church, arrogantly and cruelly as it has often treated those who did not belong to its communion; nor do we expect such an event as within the limits of even a remote probability; but we cannot doubt that recent events must tend to abate somewhat its pretensions, and diminish its social influence. In the discussions that have arisen out of the late attempt to establish a Roman Catholic hierachy by the side of the national Church, we observe that the English Unitarians have generally been opposed to the multiplication of legal restraints, and have maintained the ability of truth to defend itself, if left to a fair and open field. At all periods of their history, and in respect to the rights of others, not less than their own, they have shown themselves the consistent friends of religious liberty.

On the continent of Europe, a reaction from the theo-

logical extravagances, as well as the revolutionary tendencies, which, but a short time ago, had spread through all classes of society, has been remarked by all travellers. In France and in Germany, the denial of a supernatural element in Christianity has been checked, if not supplanted by a sounder faith.

From Geneva, we get but incidental and incomplete information, yet such as leads us to believe that the loss of political power by the national Church has not been detrimental to its spiritual interests.

In Honolulu, the capital of the Sandwich Islands, our friend Mr. Bond, who for a time conducted public religious services with good prospect of a permanent congregation, has been compelled, by physical inability, to relinquish his ministerial labors. The Committee are induced to believe, that, if a successor could be found, he would have ample encouragement in pursuing the work which Mr. Bond's state of health alone prevented his prosecuting.

As they revert to the religious condition of their own country, the Committee must congratulate the members of the Association on the gradual prevalence of what they believe to be a truer theology, and on the manifestation of what they are certain is a better temper, in numerous sections of the Christian Church. In our own body, the tendency of religious thought, which, acting under that law of freedom we so much value, has sometimes accepted extreme conclusions, has of late indicated the control of a more cautious and reverential spirit. Varieties of speculation and opinion will exist so long as we are true to the principle of religious liberty, and in allowing to others the same liberty we claim for ourselves, each will find occasion for the exercise of a wise and generous candor. Since, however, a

concurrence in regard to the great truths of Divine revelation may be justly assumed as the only basis of hearty or effective coöperation, we cannot but rejoice in the increasing evidence of a more lively attachment to those great truths. Unitarians, we are confident, will be found in future years as in past times, strenuous defenders of the unapproachable sanctity of the Gospel, and will unite with a firm faith a still more practical appreciation of its spiritual requirements. The more earnest our piety, the wider will be our influence. Let us but join to the recognition of the truth as it is in Jesus an exhibition of the mind that was in him, and we shall not fail of drawing to ourselves the confidence and respect, if not the entire sympathy, of other believers.

From individual testimony, from the tone of many Protestant pulpits, and from the statements which from time to time appear in religious journals, we feel authorized in saying, that opinions, once regarded as fundamental in the Christian system, are at the present time received with such modifications and abatements as materially to change their character. Doctrines regarded as true are defended with commendable moderation, and the opponents of these doctrines are usually noticed with Christian courtesy. There is, we conceive, a more distinct demand for a practical faith. Doctrines are tested by their fitness to regenerate the heart and sanctify the life. In the earnest inquiry for those views of truth which will constitute the surest basis of a divine life, there is a manifest approach in the different sects to the same central doctrines; and evidence is not wanting to show that the disciples of opposing schools in theology are attaching an increased value to that one doctrine of the New Testament, — Christ, the Son of the living God, — the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

For these indications of progress in the religious world, gratitude is due to the God of all truth, and the Fountain of all wisdom. Facts such as these urge us to put forth new energy in maintaining the fundamental principles which we avowed in the earliest period of our denominational existence, — the authority and sufficiency of Divine revelation, and the entire freedom of the individual mind in interpreting this revelation.

If it be true that there is an approach to that state of opinion and feeling which we have labored to introduce and render universal, are we therefore at liberty to retire from the conflict with still existing error? We would not arrogate to ourselves an undue share of influence in the production of these auspicious results. Much is to be ascribed to the increasing intelligence of our times, — to an awakened spirit of inquiry in every department of science, and to the multiplied facilities for the communication of thought, and the intercourse of mind with mind. Still, it would be untrue to the history of the last twenty-five years, it would be injustice to those who have preceded us, to allow that the principles avowed and explained by the leading minds in our denomination, and our position as a body, have been without influence in forming the religious opinion and sentiment of the present day.

This view of the influence of the past on the present aspects of society at once discloses and enforces our duty. As a denomination, let us ever adhere to our fundamental articles of faith and freedom. Dogmatism and uncharitableness are peculiar to the defence of no one class of opinions. In the divergence from received forms of faith, and the revulsion from apprehended extremes, to which all minds are prone when excited to earnest inquiry, we are in danger

of magnifying unduly our present convictions of truth. We are tempted to regard that exposition of Christian doctrine which had moved our own moral nature, as universally essential in the production of a true life. Avoiding the mistake of giving prominence to peculiarities of private speculation, while we cling to our distinctive principles, we may place ourselves among the foremost of those who shall lead on the religious progress of the world. The strength of a cause does not depend on numbers, but on intelligence, zeal, and fidelity. With strong hearts and holy lives, let us but exemplify the religion which we regard as the instrument of the highest good to ourselves and to others, and if the Christian world should not adopt our modes of thought, it will at least honor our integrity, and admit our right to be considered followers of him by whom the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring many sons unto glory.

PUBLIC MEETING.

THE Public Meeting of the Association was held on the evening of the 27th of May, in the Federal Street meeting-house, at 7½ o'clock. Prayer was offered by Rev. Samuel Barrett, D. D., of Boston. The Secretary read an abstract of the Report of the Executive Committee. The following resolutions were then introduced by the President, and responded to by gentlemen who had been invited to address the meeting: —

1. *Resolved*, That the history of the Christian Church and the signs of the times, not less than wide-spread and undeniable wants, teach us that, avoiding sectarian aggressiveness and bitterness, we should be faithful in the exposition and dissemination of the Gospel of Divine grace, as we have drawn it from the oracles of our faith.

On this resolution, REV. EDWARD B. HALL, D. D., of Providence, R. I., spoke as follows: —

I do not know whether the author of this resolution had most in mind that part of the "history of the Church" which should warn, or that which should encourage us. There is enough of both, and we are perhaps too much disposed to dwell upon the darker and more disheartening aspect. The Church has done comparatively little to bring up, not the world merely, but *itself*, to the point which Christ said must be reached before men would

ever believe in his divine mission, viz. to make all believers one. But something may be found even in this to encourage us; for if so much has been done by sects, with "aggressiveness and bitterness," to advance the principles and diffuse the spirit of the Gospel, how much could be done by union, or rather, what is there that could not be done? It is hardly extravagant to suppose, tha a single denomination, one communion and brotherhood of Christians, could do more, acting upon the high and broad principles of our religion, than is now done by all. Our own brethren, whatever other fault they may have, cannot be charged with sectarian bitterness. To avoid that, and express and diffuse the opposite, has always been the spirit and purpose of the Unitarian Association; and those of our own number, or others, who allege or fear sectarianism, do us injustice. Our sin has been that of doing nothing, rather than doing too much, to push our own opinions and enlarge our borders. Let us be open and firm, speaking the *truth* in love.

Of the "signs of the times," we can refer to only one. We have now an opportunity, more and more every year, of making ourselves heard and understood. The great obstacle in the way of unpopular truth is the difficulty of getting a hearing. From this we have suffered enough in the past, but need not longer, if we are faithful. Every true word uttered, we may almost say every false word, has now a chance of being fairly weighed. And this is all we can ask. It is more than is enjoyed by our brethren in England, who deserve all sympathy for their disabilities, and all honor for their perseverance and fidelity. Their position and ours are beginning to be known, and will compel respect. We must look yet farther abroad to find much of the old intolerance. Dr. Bacon, one of the editors of the *Independent*, — a paper that deserves its name, from its able and noble defence both of religious and civil liberty, — writes from Syria, that we know little of sectarianism here, compared with the conduct of sects there, denying all right of private judgment, yet insisting each upon its own infallibility, because founded on a divine succession!

The resolution speaks also of "wide-spread and undeniable wants"; and the Report, just read by your Secretary, abundantly authorizes this language. Whether we look at our progress or our necessities, at the established churches calling for able ministers or the new societies asking aid for a time, the isolated position of many of our fellow-laborers or the untiring efforts of those who differ and oppose, the call for books and tracts, the rapid growth of new settlements, and the ignorance and exposure of multitudes who form them, wherever we look, we see reason for increased interest, and a demand for constant and generous *action*. This action must proceed from a strong and full conviction of the need of the Gospel, and its capacity to meet these wants. The Gospel of grace and peace is the only principle or spirit by which the most conservative or the most radical can accomplish any thing desirable. This is to be our salvation. As the great man who occupied this pulpit so many years (Dr. Channing) once said to me, "I have no confidence in any reform that is not based upon the Gospel." With this Gospel in our hand, and heart, and life, we have nothing to fear for ourselves or for any. But for this, wants, difficulties, and sins might well dishearten. But this, we know, is the power of God and the presence of God in the soul and the world. Alas for him who does not know it, or does nothing to aid it! If there be a man who is unworthy the name of a Christian and freeman, it is he who never gives or toils for the freedom of the soul, who lives and dies without exerting any influence, unless a bad one, on the faith and life of the thousands, foreign or native, who are to determine the character of society, and the power of our civil and religious institutions, for ages.

Let us go forth in the spirit of the Master, and the power of truth, to labor unceasingly, and with no faint heart, for the advancement and happiness of man.

Hon. John G. Rogers of Boston then addressed the meeting.

The resolve, he said, spoke of the history of the Church and the

signs of the times; he proposed to limit himself to our own Church and our own times. It spoke of wide-spread and undeniable wants; he proposed to limit himself to two of the wants or evils now existing: the want of a more permanent union and interest between the minister and the parish, and the want of more active coöperation for missions, tracts, education, and other religious objects. A considerable part of religious intelligence consists of notices that one minister has left one parish, and that another minister is about to leave another; that one parish has a temporary supply, and that another has hired a minister for a year. The means contributed for the religious objects which he had mentioned were also small in proportion to the ability of the denomination.

It would be a great gain if we could discover that both these evils arose in a considerable degree from a single cause, and admitted of a single remedy. Without asserting positively that this is so, he would venture one or two suggestions.

There are two ways of acting on the mind by the minister; one way direct, the minister alone being active, and the parishioner passive and merely acted upon, as in preaching. The other way, where the minister excites the parish to a common action with himself, and both, moved by the same motives and excited by the same interest, act together for a common purpose of doing good. We have all of us known ministers who, with little power in the pulpit, by means of social action produced more effect than many better preachers. We have also known some among them who, by these social means, had inspired such an interest and created such esteem and affection in the parish towards themselves, that every word, tone, and look in the pulpit went to the hearts of their hearers, who were filled with wonder that others thought them dull. Said an old lady, "You may print the sermon, but you can't print the tone"; yet this very tone might be disagreeable to strangers, with whose joys and griefs, congratulations and consolations, it had never been associated, and of whose common action and sympathy it had made no part. Thus men may act more effectually *on* others by first acting *with* them. Those whose

hearts have often kindled in common action with our own for a generous purpose, are not parted with so easily as parishes and ministers often part now.

It will not do to trust as much as we have done to acting on others by preaching only. There are present causes which diminish its effect. The congregational form of service, in which the minister does all and the parish are passive, becomes in the course of time itself a hinderance. It certainly increases other difficulties. The multiplication of books, scientific and literary lectures, the amount of newspaper reading, share and diminish the interest of preaching. It is less necessary, and does not, as formerly, constitute a great part of the literature of many hearers. There are other causes existing at present, which render an audience less impressible. But it does not follow, because they are harder to act upon when they are passive, that it will be more difficult to act with them and excite their sympathy for a common purpose.

There are two ways of exciting interest open to a minister. He may do this by himself, showing a great personal interest in the family and personal concerns of the parishioner. This interest, though not of a high nature, may be turned to good effect. But when the hearts of both minister and parishioner warm and kindle each other with noble sympathies and active energy to accomplish some great object of Christian benevolence, this is a higher and holier interest, looking beyond themselves. But previous consideration and preparation may be necessary. It were well that the minister should know his people, and select the object which will most interest them ; that he should understand the best manner of approaching them, and the persons first to be enlisted ; the key to every sympathy, and the means to overcome obstacles. We ask so seldom, that any asking seems strange. We bring our claim with a distrust and diffidence which encourages refusal. We call it begging ; and if we look and act like beggars, others will regard us as such. If we look like pickpockets, we shall be so treated. The claims of duty should not appear like requests for favor. We should speak with the authority of the Gospel, and in the higher tones of Christian duty and obligation.

It may be said that ministers leave parishes in which common action has existed by Bible-classes, conferences, and Sunday schools. Yes, and without them they would have left much sooner. But these are not enough; common action, to have its best effect, should be external. Draw narrow lines round our sympathies, and they grow too weak to do much. When they flow forth generously towards others, they have their greatest power. When is a parish so strong as when it has succeeded in a noble effort for others? When does it feel so rich and able to pay its minister, and raise money for itself, as when it has raised liberally and paid liberally for others? It is an old saying, that a town that cannot support one minister can support two. Each parish is thrown into common action by its common feeling and sympathy of opposition to the other. If the sympathy in opposition will do this, the sympathy of love will do more.

The speaker said he knew how often the affairs of one profession were mistaken by another, and feared he had not spoken with that diffidence which such a knowledge should inspire. But still he hoped the clergy would excuse him, if he urged them not to expect the former effects from preaching only; not to suffer the interest arising from a common exercise of Christian benevolence to be monopolized by the laity; not to permit the influence of the minister to be diminished by a timidity which makes him shrink from presenting or being forward in such undertakings; not to limit his view to the effect of a first effort; but to look further, and to consider what will be the state of the parish, and his relations to it, when common efforts of Christian benevolence have been naturalized there. Common action is the feature of the time; it will act with the clergy or against them, as they use or shrink from it. They have less and less to hope from action on passive hearers, and more and more to hope from the feeling and sympathies of common action originating with them, and from the love, respect, and influence which it reflects back on its authors.

2. *Resolved*, That the history of Christian beneficence, and the examples of efficient labor in other directions, show that, while the

strength of every enterprise lies in the purity of personal conviction and action, success in the diffusion of truth depends very much on union of individual resources.

Rev. Barzillai Frost of Concord was invited to speak to this resolution.

It is plain, Sir, that the efficiency of this Association depends on a hearty faith in this resolution. The whole principle of associated action has been openly called in question among us, and not a few who accept it as a principle of a[illegible] re filled with undefined apprehensions and timidity in regard to future possible evils.

I shall pass by wholly that class of doubts that may be raised with equal plausibility to the existence of matter, the being of God, and the possibility of moral freedom. But there is one difficulty, growing out of the operation of this principle in past ages, that lies with the weight of a practical objection upon many strong and clear minds. They look at the manner in which associated action has crushed individual freedom, civil and religious, and sacrificed the thought, the conscience, and the heart of each to the mass.

In government, it has turned society into a machine, in which the rulers alone have been supposed to have intelligence or conscience, and all the rest to be mere wheels and bands. In heathen religions and Christian sects, it has organized the mass, to too great an extent, into a living body, of which the Sovereign Pontiff, the Pope, or a spiritual oligarchy, was the head, and all others, but organs and limbs, in quite another sense from that of the Apostle when he compared the Christian Church to a body, of which individuals were all members, one of another. And so far is this carried, even in Protestant sects and republican governments, now, that the individual conscience must give way to the majority in all cases. Thus has individual freedom and responsibility been crushed by this principle.

But do you bring this abuse of a mighty principle as an argument against its use? As well might a general, examining the

keen edge and testing the temper of a Damascus blade, reject it, because it would be formidable in the hands of his enemies. His folly would be still greater, if, assured it was already in the hands of the enemy, he should decline to take the only weapon whose temper and edge would stand the shock of his foe. Those who make this objection forget that, while this principle has combined the powers of evil and the enemies of truth and liberty on the one side, it has marshalled the sacramental hosts of God's elect on the other.

What was it that enabled the few unlettered disciples of Christ to carry his religion in triumph over the superstitions and corruptions of the world? The secret was in that union which it was the purpose of Christ's last interview at the Supper to consummate. Never did power go forth like that which emanated from the little Church in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, because never was there such union. Not only had they one faith and one heart, but one treasury. And everywhere, as soon as a few had been gathered as a branch of the same Church, each laid by in store, on the first day of the week, as God had prospered him, and it was forwarded to the common treasury at Jerusalem. From this, supplies were sent to every solitary missionary, in his distant station, that he might not be chargeable to his new converts and bring upon himself the suspicion of worldly motives. Thus not only the sympathy and prayers, but the earthly substance, of the whole body sustained each member, and fired his faith, his zeal, his courage, to face a frowning and persecuting world. Rome conquered the world by her phalanx, a military array so compact, that, however small in numbers, it was impenetrable to an enemy. By a similar moral union of action, as well as of faith, Christianity conquered Rome in a few centuries, and placed a Christian on the throne of the Cæsars.

It is within the memory of not the oldest in this assembly, that some seven or eight noble men, some of them still living, seeing the devastations of intemperance, assembled in this city to take counsel. To some of them the evil seemed too great to be en-

countered. Their hearts fainted, and they were hopeless. The remark of one of that number will cause his name to be for ever associated, not with the seven wise men of Greece, but with that greater number of Christian sages who are the light of the world. Mr. Dexter said, "What is *right* is practicable." On faith in that proposition they formed a society; investigated the truth; raised means; sent their missionaries into every village, and county, and State, and a vast majority of the wisdom and worth of the land and all lands joined them; the inebriates from the gutters flocked to their standard; the appetites, the evil habits and propensities, and the interests of men gave way before a mighty principle carried forward by associated action. Men had been preaching against it individually, since the beginning of the world, and had scarcely made a convert.

A venerable man has just been laid in his grave, with appropriate honors, on whose heart the Spirit of God first distinctly impressed the spirit of missions on this continent. Dr. Judson was then a youth in college. A few young men of kindred spirit kindled with the same desire in sympathy. They appealed to the churches. Many Ministerial Associations discouraged the idea as impracticable. But the spark kindled by God's Spirit was not to be quenched by man's interference. At length a few Christians determined to raise the means to send them to the heathen. And now every Christian sect is united in a great organization for this purpose. The Baptists, for the last year, by contributing twenty-nine cents for every church member on an average, have raised $95,000. And the Society for Foreign Missions, by contributing seventy-four cents a member, has raised $246,000. In Africa alone, — that benighted region, — in 1847, there were 170 missionary stations, 17,000 communicants, and 20,000 pupils. Whole heathen communities have been christianized, as in the Sandwich Islands. There is scarcely a nation on the globe, from the northern to the southern pole, where the Gospel and Christian science and civilization have not got a footing. Can the darkness of heathenism remain before the beacon-fires of truth kindled all

over the earth? As well might old Night maintain its reign when God said, Let there be light. As well may savage life flourish by the side of Christian civilization.

Almost as much has been done for home as for foreign missions, by all sects. It is owing to this associated action of the sects, that there is scarcely a small settlement in the backwoods of New England, or the prairies of the West, where there is not a preacher of Christ, and a Sunday school, permanent or occasional. Our efforts have been confined chiefly to home missions, if that can be called "home" which includes one half of the globe. The Reports of your Secretaries, and especially the one from which we have heard copious extracts this evening, make the history of this Association too well known to require a word from me. Its whole history is one illustration of the value of associated effort. The Theological School it has aided and cherished, every minister it has helped to educate, every feeble society it has helped to sustain until in some instances it is able to sustain itself and one or two other societies, are fruits of the union of individual resources.

In past ages of general ignorance and superstition, such power did this principle of associated action give to the few who had knowledge and talent, that they too often crushed and oppressed the multitude. Now the spread of knowledge, freedom, and religion have almost taken away the power of abuse.

But the same causes have given vastly increased power of good to this principle. God in his providence seems just wresting this terrible instrument of oppression from the wicked, and putting it into the hands of his servants. Let us not cast it away now. The union of the many, coerced by the power of the few, is giving place to voluntary association. There can be little danger of association when any individual may step aside at pleasure, where the power of the many cannot reach him. The tendencies of the human mind, now that it has just escaped coercion, are centrifugal. Since, then, we can unite without danger, let us make a hearty, close, efficient union of sympathy and means for the advancement of Christian truth.

Hon. Henry Chapin of Worcester spoke as follows.

Mr. President, — I am aware of the difference between the temples of Mammon and of Justice, and this temple dedicated to the worship of the living God. I am aware that it is a hazardous experiment for a layman to rise and speak upon sacred things in a presence like this. Yet in full view of all this, I shall venture briefly to second and sustain the resolution before us.

The resolution, if I understand its import, inculcates unity of action and energy among liberal Christians. At a time like this, it is well that this subject should be brought distinctly before us. This is an age of intense energy and activity. We ride upon the wings of the wind, the vapors bear our burdens, and the fervent lightnings hasten to bear our messages of business or of pleasure to the remotest corners of the land. The elements of nature are, more than ever before, brought under the influence of the human will. Men move in masses to the accomplishment of good or evil, and the results of their efforts seem to depend, to a great extent, upon the unity of the spirit with which they are prosecuted.

And here I must be allowed to say, that there seems to exist among us an apparent want of faith in the efficacy of concerted action. I may be wrong. The lessons of early life may have given a wrong impression, yet I cannot escape from their influence. I listened in my childhood and youth to the teachings of the straightest sect. I sat, as it were, at the feet of Gamaliel, and although I have so far departed from the faith of the fathers as to believe there may be "a diversity of gifts, yet the same spirit," a unity in the religious feelings of the heart while there is a difference in the theological sentiments of the head, yet the zeal, energy, and devotion of the votaries of a self-styled Evangelical faith, the unity and ardor with which great moral and religious enterprises have been carried on by the members of a sterner sect than our own, have so far impressed themselves upon the memory of the past, as to constitute within me, to a certain extent, the standard of sincerity, and to lead me to regret that

there should seem to exist among us an apparent infidelity upon the subject now under discussion.

Be this as it may, it remains a fact not to be disputed, that great results have generally been the consequence of combined action. The philosopher in his closet, the scholar in his study, and the prophet in communing with his Maker, may develop great truths, but it takes the living masses of men to give practical vitality to those truths, and to scatter them broadcast over the land. The Hebrew prophet could ascend the mountain, and, amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, receive the laws *alone*, but he could not carry them to Canaan. It required that great multitude, with their eyes fixed upon the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, to bear on the ark of the covenant, conquer opposing nations, and guaranty to coming generations a Saviour of the line of David. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of mere singleness in action is found in the days of chivalry, when each knight-errant bound on his own shield and helmet, bestrode his own beast, went forth to do battle against the world in behalf of the weak and oppressed, and left the problem all unsolved whether the world was made better or worse than it was before. An example of a far different character, both in its nature and effect, is found in the American Revolution. The Convention at Philadelphia could adopt the immortal Declaration of Independence, and its members could pledge to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, but it was the combined energies of three millions of people, bound together by a common interest and a common patriotism, which could sunder the bonds which bound them to the mother country, and fight their way to nationality and freedom.

May I be allowed to say one word more? Great as are the results of a union of the efforts and energies of individuals, it is not without its dangers. There is danger that men engaged deeply in a cause which is dear to them should overlook the great principle which lies at the foundation of all liberal Christianity, that we are to look not for a coincidence of intellectual opinions, but for a unity

in the feelings and motives of the heart. There is danger that we should directly or indirectly attempt to tyrannize over the individual consciences of men, and thus help to make them hypocrites for the mere reason that it may not be pleasant to differ in opinion from those with whom one undertakes to act in concert. This should never be. Far better would it be, that one should go a hermit to his grave, than that the free pulsations of an honest heart should be enslaved, or the free utterances of an honest tongue should be silenced.

Especially is this true in a country like our own. Every breeze which blows from our mountains, every wave which breaks upon our coasts, every truth which breathes out from the declarations of our fathers, proclaims that *here*, if nowhere else, *perfect freedom* should be guarantied to man. And if the liberal Christians of the day shall disregard the lessons which are here taught so clearly that he who runs may read them, then will they prove themselves unworthy of their name, and, like the assembly which gathered together at Babel, lose the only peculiarity which has bound them together as a people.

3. *Resolved*, That personal holiness, originating in an active faith, and expressed in the practical life, is at once the proof and the method of a true reconciliation of the soul to God.

Rev. Edmund H. Sears of Wayland moved the acceptance of this resolution, and spoke as follows : —

Mr. President, — I am sorry that I feel so unequal to the discussion of the subject of this resolution ; not the less so because I am profoundly impressed with its exceeding importance, for I do not believe there is any subject which could come before this audience with which the life and prosperity of the denomination are so intimately connected, as the one which this resolution comprehends. We picture to ourselves the lofty ideals of Christian excellence ; we paint the beauty and the loveliness of virtue ; but the question comes up from anxious minds, — it has come up to me from such minds through my whole ministry, — How can we attain to this vir-

tue? How can we make these lofty ideals come down into practice? And perhaps we have not always kept in view the *origin* of the Christian virtues, not always remembered that close within this practical world, and underlying all its activities, there is a spirit-world, without whose life and action all our morality is no better than a name and a show.

The resolution, if I understand it, asserts the doctrine that there is no personal holiness that does not originate in a living faith. Sir, I believe it. In other words, I believe in the old doctrine of Paul of justification by *faith*, in distinction from the more modern doctrine of justification by *dogma*. For what is faith? It is not belief. It is not the result merely of a logical argument, — not an opinion which a man holds after a nice balancing of evidence and probabilities. Paul does not mean that. Faith is such an apprehension of spiritual things, — God, the immortal world, the human soul bursting with its capacities and its awful destinies, — that these truths stand out bold and bright and clear, and form to us a world in which we live and move and have our being, not less real than this world of sense and matter that lies about us. That is faith, and, in my opinion, nothing short of that is faith. The man of faith no more needs evidence of the existence of the objects of faith, than the man of sense needs evidence of the existence of the objects of sense.

Well, the proposition is, that this faith originates personal holiness. And why? Because such a faith takes hold of us, and rules us, and possesses us. The idea of God thus apprehended glows within us like a noonday sun. Immortality broods over us like the day, as Wordsworth says. And is it not true, that a man will always be swayed by those things which for the time being seem to him the most substantial verities? If they be wordly interests, material good, he will follow them. His religion, if he have any, will bend to them, and he will bow down to the God of this world. On the other hand, if spiritual things seem most real to him, he will follow them; this world and all its interests will bend to them. And that is holiness. For holiness, by the very

definition of the word, is the consecration of all that we are and all that we have unto God.

It was my good fortune — yes, I was about calling it good fortune — to be educated under the influence of the old Assembly's Catechism; for I got good impressions from it, notwithstanding its gnarled and crabbed theology, and the thorns and briers which it had sticking out all over it. And there is one thing which, in that theology, constitutes in my opinion the chief element of its power. It is its exceeding definiteness. All the abstractions of religion in that creed take a local habitation and a name. We are accustomed to speak of its mysteries and absurdities, and the smoke of metaphysics in which it is involved. But I tell you that, to those who believe them, its doctrines are no mysteries. Those words, God, judgment, heaven, and hell, have a meaning to them which is terribly definite.

Now I do not see why a true and a liberal theology may not have just this same element of power; why it may not be just as definite as a false one. Dr. Channing remarked, some ten years ago, that Unitarianism must undergo important modifications and developments, ere it could touch living springs in the soul. I believe it has the germs and elements of just such a development, and that this development is towards a more positive and vitalizing faith. Why may we not conceive of God, not as a set of qualities and attributes, but as a living person, whose countenance ever shines above us like the sun shining in his strength? Why is not the spiritual world unveiled to us, so that its forms come out distinct and bold, and seize the imagination and hold it captive? Why might not our theories of human nature, instead of touching on the surface of man, go into him and explore him, and send down the blaze of truth among his biases and proclivities to evil, making all that is wrong in him stand out black in the light, so that he will cry out and pray for a clean heart, as the only thing which he cannot live without, either in this life or the life to come?

With such a faith as this, I do not think we need be concerned

about the practical life. It would hardly be necessary to preach morality. Such a faith would of itself go out into practice. It would create for itself a lovely and a pure morality. The life within would be manifest in the life without. Just as the juices of the tree flow into all the branches, and clothe them with foliage and bloom, and spread out all the scenery of spring-time, even thus would the inward life created by such a faith flow over all the practical life, and make all its deserts blossom as the rose.

I agree with all that has been said of social action. I appreciate the value of our social appliances, whereby we seek to create and keep alive an interest in religion. But how clear is it that we must draw from deeper wells than these. All interest in religion resting on these alone will pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew. We must come back, after all, to the largest and most vital action of the intellect, or rather of the whole soul acting through the intellect, creating this faith which has been described, whose clearly defined objects move and sway the feelings and affections as the heavenly bodies move the tides.

I suppose no man ever had more power in moving the feelings of the masses than Whitefield. But he left no mark upon society. All traces of his preaching soon passed away. And when we read his published sermons, I think we see the reason of this. They have no framework of Christian doctrine; I take it for granted, that they are the most remarkable collection of pious and solemn *nothings* that ever fell from the lips of man. On the other hand, John Wesley, with far less power than Whitefield in exciting the feelings of men, but with far more power in putting *ideas* into their minds and lodging them there, and organizing churches and societies around those ideas, laid the foundation of a denomination which perhaps has spread wider, and accomplished greater good, than any other denomination in Christendom.

How is it in worldly matters? Suppose you would construct a railroad, you would not get men together and exhort them to feel deeply upon the subject. You would first survey the route, gather up the facts, and exhibit them clearly. And then men would be

moved, and moved strongly, to that specific object. How is it in science? Suppose you would interest an ignorant man in the subject of astronomy, you would not exhort him to star-gazing; you would put the telescope to his eye, and then the stupid peasant even would break out in a shout of wonder. It is just so in spiritual things; and is not faith the telescope of the mind that brings spiritual things clear, and makes their outlines distinct and bright, and resolves all these dim nebulæ into suns and stars? With all our other means, then, for exciting an interest in religion, let us have profounder thought, prolonged meditation, gazing, as Milton says, on the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful study.

Rev. Edmund B. Willson, of Grafton, in rising to second the resolution, said: —

He had been expected to offer some remarks upon the subject embraced in the resolution, but he thought we had reached a point, after the address of the last speaker, when it would be well to close the meeting. For one, he should like to retire beyond the bustle of this noisy city; but he supposed he must fulfil the duty required of him. He remarked that the resolution contained an epitome of the Gospel, — the destiny of the soul and the plan of salvation. Faith is the root of all personal holiness, and practical righteousness its fruit. When our Saviour came to the man with a withered hand, to the halt, the blind, and the sick of the palsy, and healed them, there was an act of faith on their part. To one he said, "Go; thy faith hath saved thee"; to another, "According to thy faith be it unto thee." So it is spiritually. Christ comes to us to heal us of our moral infirmities, to make us whole; and he says to us, "According to your faith be it unto you." Holiness is wholeness, perfect soundness of every part. I speak from consciousness when I say, that none of us are whole. Some have ossified hearts, deadened consciences, with diseased and distorted affections. How many there are who lie like dead men in the presence of Him who only can speak the words of life!

What have we to do as an Association? We should make it our aim and end to bring men into the possession of this living faith, that they may press on toward a life of practical righteousness. As language is both expressive and suggestive of thought, so the exercise of a righteous and Christian life is both the fruit and the nutriment of faith. As the fruits of the tree ripen in the autumn sun, and, if not removed, fall upon the roots and nourish the tree again, so do the fruits of righteousness become the nutriment of the true life of the soul.

4. *Resolved*, That the past contributions of our scholars to the means of Biblical study, and the interest taken at present in the formation of Bible classes, concur with the claims of Scripture, to impose on us the duty of an earnest and constant perusal of the sacred volume.

Rev. Francis Parkman, D. D., of Boston, was invited to speak upon this resolution, but said: —

He was admonished by the lateness of the hour that it would be improper to detain the audience with the remarks he had intended to make. He should like to have presented to their notice some account of the eminent scholars and critics who had by their commentaries and writings illuminated the Scriptures, and enabled the common reader to go to the sacred volume and understand its divinely inspired pages. He would have spoken of Ezra, the glorious company of the Seventy, of Wickliffe, and of Lightfoot and Griesbach of a later period, and the mighty host of learned men who have given their study and life to the exposition of the Bible. He would also have spoken of the importance of a diligent study of the Scriptures; but he must reserve what he had intended to offer on these topics, which, perhaps, he might present on some future occasion.

Francis B. Hayes, Esq., of Boston, seconded the resolution, but, owing to the lateness of the hour, said but a few words.

He referred also to the benefit that had been conferred on the Christian world by the labors of eminent scholars in the critical study and explanation of the Bible. He regarded the diligent study of the Scriptures as of the greatest importance, because it saves us from the gloom which would otherwise come over us as we look into the grave, having revealed to us its great doctrines of life and immortality. Although Nature affords some light in regard to the attributes and providence of God, yet it is to the Scriptures we must look for the revelation and evidence of this truth, and also as the rule of faith and moral conduct.

5. *Resolved*, That the logical and spiritual tendencies of Unitarian thought lead, not to scepticism or disorder, but to a calm and clear faith.

Rev. William H. Eliot, of St. Louis, addressing the President, said :—

If the responsibility rested upon me, I would not speak, but the responsibility rests upon you, and I will say a few words. I have *heard* of a Christianity without Christ, and of a preacher whose sermons and prayers, so far as the mention of the name of Christ is concerned, might have been apparently delivered in a Mohammedan or Pagan temple ; but there has been no such spirit manifested here to-night. He felt that, if the committee could have known what the speeches would have been to-night, they would not have added this resolution.

Mr. Eliot then gave an interesting account of his church in St. Louis. When he went there he had *twelve* persons at the communion. He now had sometimes as many as one hundred and sixty. How were they made Unitarians? Not by the preaching of dogmatic and controversial theology, but by teaching them the need of coming nearer to Christ. Though not strong, their strength consisted in the power of their Christian faith ; the calmness and resignation with which they could meet the trials of life and the hour of death. There are more who have become Unita-

rians by conviction of the heart, than by an increased scepticism of the mind.

Rev. William Mountford, of Gloucester, was invited to speak, and in allusion to the supposed tendency of Unitarianism to scepticism, said : —

It is not true. The spirit of Unitarianism does not lead to scepticism. In England the Unitarians are placed in a position to test this very question. They stand in the position of Reformers. He said that nine out of twelve of the Corn League were Unitarians. In proportion to their numbers, they exert a large influence upon the public mind. That influence was in favor of a sound religious faith. Who are the men who have written the ablest words, and proved themselves the ablest defenders of the Christian religion, on its historical as well as its internal evidences? They have been Unitarians. The very men who had exposed the errors and dogmas of the Church had been the strongest advocates of the faith common to all Christians.

Who, in other lands, are the men who have broken away from a traditional belief, and lapsed, not into some other more rational form of Christian faith, but into the depths of infidelity? In France they had fallen from Catholicism into worse errors still.

He referred to Milton, and Locke, and Newton, and Priestley. Their Unitarianism led them, not to scepticism, but, from the study of Nature and her laws, to the further study of the Scriptures for the defence of Christianity against the assaults of the Adversary.

Mr. Mountford allud our great rivers, and the vast country that spreads itself to the westward. Unless an influence shall go forth from our religion, unless Christianity shall be presented to the mind in a form that cannot be rejected, so that it shall interest and move the heart, those beautiful regions will lack the elements of true prosperity and power. Let us labor on till our warfare is accomplished, and the world is blest, and the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

ACT OF INCORPORATION.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-seven.

An Act to incorporate the American Unitarian Association.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: — Section 1. Charles Briggs, Samuel K. Lothrop, Henry P. Fairbanks, their associates and successors, are hereby made a corporation, by the name of the American Unitarian Association, with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all the duties, liabilities, and restrictions, set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes; and said corporation may hold real and personal estate to the value of fifty thousand dollars, to be devoted exclusively to the promotion of the interests of moral and religious instruction. Section 2. All donations, devises, and bequests of real and personal estate, which may heretofore have been made to the American Unitarian Association, or to the Executive Committee thereof, shall be and enure to the use and benefit of the corporation hereby created, to be appropriated, however, to the purposes designated in any other donation, devise, or bequest. Section 3. This Act shall take effect from and after its passage.

House of Representatives, March 3d, 1847. Passed to be enacted.

EBEN. BRADBURY, *Speaker.*

In Senate, March 4, 1847. Passed to be enacted.

W. B. CALHOUN, *President.*

March 4th, 1847. Approved.

GEO. N. BRIGGS.

Secretary's Office, March 5, 1847.

I certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the original Act.

JOHN G. PALFREY,

Secretary of the Commonwealth.

BY-LAWS.

ARTICLE 1. The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure

Christianity throughout our country; and all Unitarian Christians in the United States shall be invited to unite and coöperate with it for that purpose.

ART. 2. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription be paid, and a subscription of thirty dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

ART. 3. The officers shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and five Directors, two of whom, at least, shall be laymen. These officers shall be chosen by ballot, at the annual meeting, and shall hold their offices for one year, or till others be chosen in their stead.

ART. 4. These officers shall constitute an Executive Committee, who shall meet at least once in each month, and shall have charge of all the business and interests of the Association, the direction of its funds and operations, with power to fill any vacancies that may occur in their number, between any two annual meetings, and to call special meetings of the corporation whenever they shall deem it necessary or expedient.

ART. 5. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a full record of the meetings of the corporation, and of the Executive Committee; to conduct the correspondence of the Association, and keep an accurately arranged file of the same; and in general to perform such services, to suggest, devise, and execute, under the direction of the Executive Committee, such plans and measures, as shall, in their judgment, tend to promote the objects of the Association, increase its usefulness, and enlarge the sphere of its influence; and his salary shall be determined by vote of the corporation at the annual meeting.

ART. 6. The annual meeting of the Association shall be held on the Tuesday before the last Wednesday in May, at nine o'clock, A. M., at such place in the city of Boston as the Executive Committee may appoint, of which due notice shall be given by advertisement in two or more newspapers published in Boston, at least ten days previous.

ART. 7. Any amendment of these articles, proposed at one annual meeting, may be adopted at the next, if a majority of the members present vote in favor of it.

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The following clergymen have been made members for life of the Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

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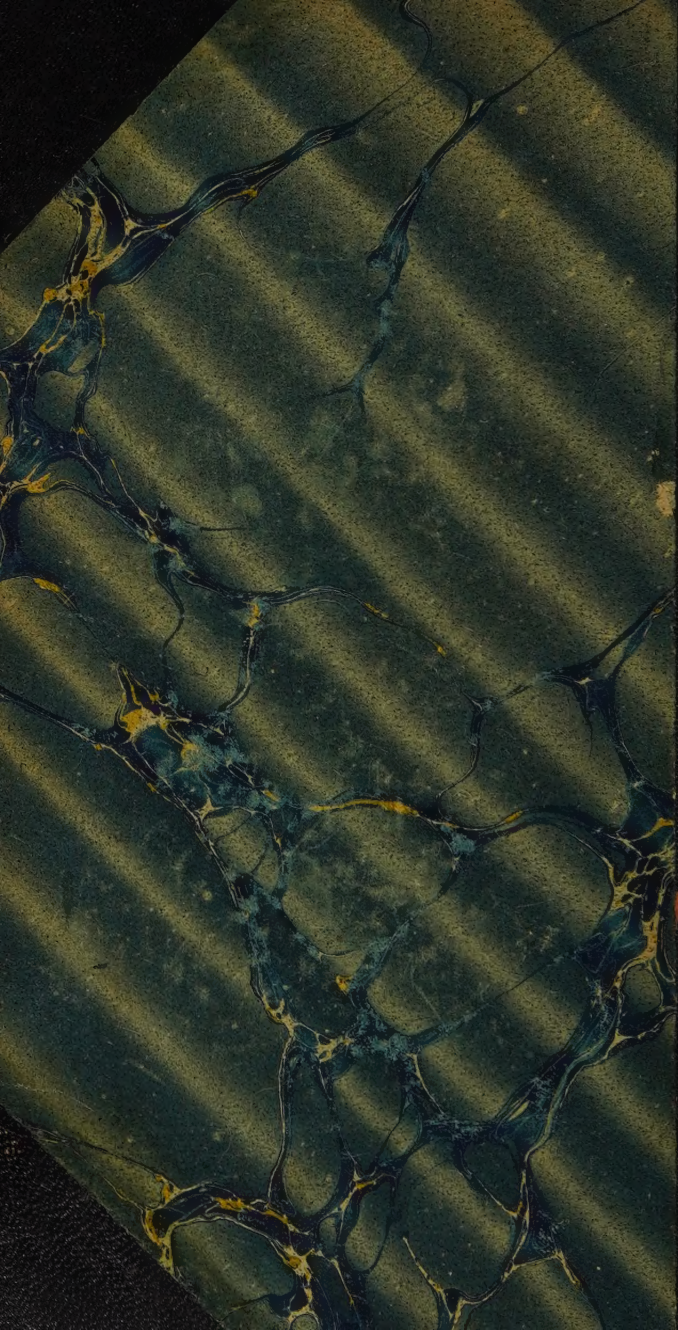
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